DANGER OF BEING ALMOST A Christian.

SHEWING,

1. How far men may go with Grace.
2. Why some men go so far.
3. Why they go no farther.
4. The dangerous estate of such Persons.

By *John Chishull*, Minister of the Gospel.

The second Edition.

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To the Right Worſhipfull *Peter Atkins*, Mayor, *John Blundel* Eſq; with the reſt of the Burgeſſes, Aſſiſtants, and Inhabitants of *Tiverton.*

Beloved in the Lord,

Hat reaſon You (above all others) have to read and conſider the things which I preſent to your view, the Introduction to, and Application of the truth laid before you will tell. I truſt many of you are convinced that I carry you upon my heart, and that my deſign in this undertaking is only to ingage your hearts more fully to God. Upon this account I am confident of your complyance with it.

I have reckoned it amongſt my choiceſt mercies, that the Lord hath owned me in ſome meaſure amongſt you, and hath made you to ſee! as well as hear what I have ſpoken. Yet

in the midst of my rejoycing for some, I have had sad thoughts of heart for others, for whom I have sometimes had great hopes, and again as great fears; Since I have known any thing of Preaching, (and indeed it is little that I yet know of it) I have Preach'd very much by what I have seen and known of your tempers and Conditions, and I can say (through Mercy) that my labour hath not been altogether in vain. I bless God that I can think on some of you with delight; the entertainment which you have given to the Word, and the gracious impressions which you carry upon your spirits are my rejoycing before the Lord, Yet give me leave to minde you, that the number of Converted ones is but small in comparison of those Convinced ones which I have observed amongst you. Many have received the Word with trembling, others with joy; yet after such shakings and strong working of heart which they could not conceal, have either grown cold again, or else have contented themselves with a lukewarm profession; This I can truly say hath abated much of my former comfort; and so strong have the impressions of these things been upon my spirit, that many sad thoughts have risen in me that surely my labour is neer at an end in that place, and the Lord will call me off either by death (as he threatned of late) or some other way. Upon this consideration I have been willing to listen to those who desired

that these few Sermons might be made publick, that by this means they might lie before you, either to quicken you or to accuse you, that when you shall neither hear, nor see me, you may see in them how my heart stood affected towards you: and possibly the view of these lines may awaken the convictions which some of you have buried, the perswasions which in some are decayed, and the resolutions which some of you have taken up for God, but not followed: Oh when this Book falls into any such hands, (as doubtless such it will meet withall) let me intreat those herein concerned to suffer these two thoughts to dwell a little upon their hearts.

First, that their hearing as well as my preaching must come to judgement.

Secondly, that Convictions slighted, Perswasions not improved, Promises and purposes broken, will be the worst companions that you can carry to Hell with you; yet this I am assured of, that many of you cannot perish but under the weight of many of these.

I have observed two ways, in which especially the Devil couzens convinced souls.

First, in the Time: *he tels them it is too soon to be serious in youth, another time will serve; thus many perish under* delaies. *To prevent this evil, I presented you formerly with a smal Treatise* * *which I hope hath satisfied you fully of the folly and danger of delaying.*

* The Young Mans Memento.

Secondly,

Secondly, he labours to deceive in the measure *of the change that is wrought; if he sees that they will do something, yea and that the soul is agreed upon the time, that it must be* Now *while it is called to day, then he strives to limit them. First, with Negatives. He tels them they are not as they were, and therefore all is well. He tels them they are changed; and it may be true, though they are not made* New. *If they be civil or moral that were prophane and unrighteous, this he perswads them is very much: but if he suffer them to put on a form of Religion, though it reach not the heart; then he assures them that their Reformation is full in weight and measure heaped up, pressed down, and running over; when all this time they are not come to the lowest form of those that are Christians indeed. Now, knowing that some of you are resolved to do something, and fearing that you should be deceived, and so do nothing to the purpose. I have laid these things before you, that you might be the better able to judge of the measure of your perswasions, professions, and performances.*

And since I have undertaken to speak to all, being affectionately willing to be serviceable to you all. Let me add a word to you that refuse to attend the publick Ministry in that place, to hear what hath been there delivered, yet possibly you will vouchsafe a private perusal

of

of these truths: If this little Tract comes into your hands, I beseech you enquire seriously by it into the state of your souls; for I fear you have little close convincing Preaching amongst You. O bethink your selves of former dayes, when you sat under the Now dispised Ministry in Tiverton, *which some of you called the Ministry of Christ, and your selves the seals of it; You seemed then to have some sense of the Quickness and Power of the Word; but how is it now? Are these Times better then those? To what considerable height are you grown in Christianity since you turned your backs upon those Opportunities you once counted precious? Ah let me tell you, though you have deserted me, I cannot cast you out of my thoughts, hopes, and Prayers, trusting that the Lord will bring back such as have set their faces to seek him in truth, as he hath done some already, in answer to Prayer. Yet you know that I have lost nothing by your leaving of me, but the opportunities of being further serviceable to your souls; and this indeed to me is a great loss; for if I know any thing of my heart, it is this, that I value my life by the advantages that I have of being helpful to poor souls in the great things of God.*

It is an easie matter to draw up those that have no grace to any form; and this were a poor low thing to make our interest. By this meanes it is as easie to stop young awakened

Souls before they come half way to Christianity; it is my fear for many of you, that you are arrived no further then the forme; and my fear is so great that you will hinder others from going beyond it, by perswading them into an opinion of themselves, that they are Christians, before they are, or know what it is to be such.

If this may prevent any of you from miscarrying any way, I shall heartily blesse the Lord, and rejoyce to be also a helper of your Faith.

Finally my friends of all sorts, Lay what you have heard, or may hear read to the Word, and your hearts to both, and judge faithfully in this matter. Put it to the Question whether you are Altogether Christians or no, and resolve to be such, or to be nothing. Be in good earnest with God, and cleave to him with ful purpose of heart. Oh fulfil my joy which you cannot more considerably further then by a candid acceptance, and conscientious improvement of what I here tender to you. That it may be every way for your good, you shall have with it the Prayers of

Your willing servant in the work of the Lord,

London Jan. 16. 1656.

Jo. Chishull.

Almost thou perswadest me to be a Christian.

CHAP. I.

The Introduction.

IT is not usual with me to make Apologies for, or Introductions to my Discourses: but at this time I conceive it is convenient, if not necessary to speak something of this nature. Though it be sufficient warrant for me to pitch upon this portion which I have chosen, because it is the word of the Lord, and the same consideration is weighty to enjoyn your best attention; yet there is something more, which hath swayed with me to take these words into my serious thoughts, and to present the result of them to you, which I hope when you have weighed, they will seem as additional arguments to awaken your spirits, and you will account your selves particularly enga-

ged to hear what I am so deeply ingaged to speak. I had chosen an other subject to treat upon, which I conceived might suit well with that which I so lately finished; but my resolutions to prosecute that were changed by some impressions which the Lord made upon me in my late sickness.

That I was visited with weakness, is known to you all; but how great it was, and how near to the grave it brought me, is known but to few. But in this, (which was the soarest which I ever experienced,) yea in the very height and prevalency of it when my friends did many of them look upon me as under a sentence of death, then was the Lord pleased

First, to give me a particular assurance of my recovery, from that scripture, *Ps.*118. 17. *Thou shalt not die, but live, and declare the works of the* LORD.

Secondly, a particular knowledge of the time of my recovery, from *Hos.*6.2. *After two dayes I will revive* thee, *in the third day I will raise* thee *up, and* thou *shalt live in* my *sight*. All which I found exactly made good unto me to a day, according to the Word of the Lord, which was then set upon my spirit.

Thirdly, the Lord did not onely assure me of my life, but did also appoint me out my work, without which I account my life of very smal value. At that time when

I was under a strong Fever, and other distempers which might very well be judged unfit companions for meditation; I say, being under the paines of my growing disease, my thoughts were then drawn strongly out to consider of the state and condition of this place; and considering the people of it, I rank them under three Heads.

First, some that minded not God, nor Religion, and that sat unshaken under the Word.

Secondly, some that I hope have received it, and that do sincerely desire to follow it.

Thirdly, such as halt betwixt two opinions, that hang betwixt God and the world, that are wrought upon by the Word, and are under strong convictions, and workings of spirit, but yet are not brought fully to close with Christ; these are I am perswaded not a few in this place. The serious consideration of these did most of all affect my soul with pitty, and that pitty wrought in me strong and earnest desire. It grieved me to see so many souls like *Laodicea*, *Rev.* 3. 15. *Lukewarm*, or like *Ephraim*, *half-baked*, *Hos.* 7. 8. it did not a little trouble my spirit to see so many persons carry their convictions about them, as prisoners dragg their chains after them: I am perswaded if every person that hath been convinced under the word in this place (and

that

that hath had ſome kinde of perſwaſions to come in to Chriſt, and yet ſtands it out) had but a chain about his Legg, we ſhould hear a fearful ratling of iron when the Congregation moves; Thus was my ſoul grieved for many of you; but my affections did not ſpend themſelves in pittying, but awakened my deſires, and I then caſt about me how I might be ſerviceable to you, with that little inch of time that the Lord ſhould give me, even to you that ſeem at ſome times not to be far from the Kingdom of *God*, and yet if you go no farther, are never like to come there.

While my thoughts were thus working, it pleaſed the Lord to ſet this portion of Scripture which I have read unto you upon my Spirit, in which I ſaw your condition exactly preſented in *Agrippa*. But this word it ſelf was not barely brought home to me, but the Lord gave in then to my thoughts thoſe things which I have to deliver to you, ſo that I may ſafely ſay, that hee put the word into my mouth; for what I have now to deliver, both for the doctrine, and all the particulars, relating to explain and confirm it, were penn'd when I was unable to govern a pen; they were framed in my greateſt weaknes, and taken from my mouth by a friend that came to viſit me.

Theſe things I mention to you, firſt that

you

you may be perswaded to passe by any thing of weakness in this discourse, knowing it was composed in the midst of weaknes, and that I aim not to commend my self to you, but to present your conditions before you, and that with all manner of plainness.

Secondly, that if you meet with any thing usefull and seasonable, you would give the Glory to God; if the Word meet with any of your souls, say, the Lord hath met with me this day; if it hit as right as *Davids* stone did, and stick in your foreheads; know I threw it as he did, not by skill, but by Faith; it is the Lord that guided my hand. If any say, Can all that which is delivered in several sermons be the product of a few hours meditation? I answer, that I can say without saining what *Jacob* offered to excuse his hasty dinner for his Father, *Gen.* 27. 20. *The Lord brought it unto my hand.*

Thirdly, to shew you what speciall and peculiar reason some of you have to attend diligently to what shall be spoken; you cannot but see a finger in the margent bidding you observe, and the hand of God pointing at you; for though hee speaks in every word, yet more especially in such as he sends by special messengers, or directs to us by singular and remarkable providences. Now there are two things which

which should stir you up to listen to this words, as not being of common and ordinary consideration.

First, that one is raised from the dead to speak to you.

Secondly, that this word was put into his mouth, especially for your sakes, so that he can say, that this work which he is about this day, is part of his great errand, for which the Lord sent him back again to this place.

Fourthly, that you may know that I have you upon my heart in all conditions, in sickness as well as in health, in life and in death. But if none of these things move you, know that God will raise up *Nineveh* in judgement against you, who repented at his word, whom God had brought from the grave. Nay the rich man in hell will come against you, who perswaded himself that his brethren would repent if one from the dead were sent unto them; and that which is worse, the Lord who hath now raised me up for you, will raise me up to condemn you; yea this word which I now preach to you, shall be terrible, and you shal not be able to stand before it in the day of the Lord.

This is sufficient (and to some may appear more then enough) to my present occasion of handling the words. Now to the occasion

occasion of the words themselves as they lie in the Text.

The rise of these words is evident to be from *Paul* his discourse, of which we have a full account in this Chapter,

The substance of his speech was to defend himself against the accusations of the *Jews* before *Agrippa*, *Festus*, the Governor, and *Bernice*, with others that sat as Judges betwixt him and the *Jews*. The speech hath three principal Heads.

First, an account of his life, and especially of his zeal against the Christians before his conversion, from *v.* 4. to 13.

Secondly, his wonderfull conversion, *ver.* 13. 18.

Thirdly, his practice and profession afterwards, *ver.* 19. 23.

The next considerable is the issue of his speech; It wrought variously upon his Judges.

First, *Festus* deemed him mad, yet he thought his madness was not common; he judged it to be a learned madness; Not being able to entertain the Doctrines which he preacht of the Resurrection, nor to credit the story which *Paul* told of his conversion, he thought that these were but clouds and fancies of his brain which was overwrought.

Secondly, *Agrippa* is of another mind

and

and receives more *candidly*, though he do not digeſt *fully* what *Paul* had ſaid; he ſeems to be ſo far convinced of the truth, that he is upon the turning point, ready to come over to *Paul*.

Thirdly, the whole Councel took ſuch impreſſions from his diſcourſe, that they all agree that *Paul* is innocent, *verſe* 30, 31.

Then.

This ſhews us the coherence of theſe words with the former, and it refers us either to *Pauls* ſpeech, or to *Feſtus*; if we conſider it as relating to the firſt, then it ſhews us the ground of *Agrippa*'s perſwaſion.

If to the *latter*, then it helps to heighten his perſwaſion, and to ſhew us how ſtrong it was at the preſent. *Then*, (*viz*) when *Agrippa* had conſidered of what *Paul* had ſpoken, either in his firſt ſpeech which was to all the Council, although directed more eſpecially to him, *ver.* 2. or in his reply to *Feſtus*. Now if we conſider theſe perſwaſions in *Agrippa* to ariſe from *Pauls* general ſpeech, it will according to the parts of it afford us theſe Obſervations: Firſt, from the relation of *Pauls* former courſe of life.

Obſerv. That when the Lord makes great and viſible changes upon open and violent enemies of his wayes, he cauſes much of conviction to fall upon the ſpirits of conſidering perſons; for they which

conſult

consult with reason, must needs conclude that there must be some remarkable thing, something of weight that must cause such a change.

Second, from the manner of his conversion. *Obser.* The discovering of the way, a change is wrought in, is as useful and convincing sometimes as the change it self. *Paul* thought it no idle story to tell them how God brought him over, as well as that he had done it. This may serve to justifie the the practices of those who desire to know the way of Gods working upon souls in the bringing them over to Christ, knowing how demonstrative this is of the work of grace, beyond a bare professing that I do believe, or repent.

Third, From the account that *Paul* gives of his after-practise. *Obs.* That boldness in living up to the truths we are convinc'd of, does make much for the convincing of such as yet have not received the truth. This argued that there was some thing of reality in that relation which he made of his change, and the manner, which at first hearing might seem ridiculous, and incredible. They who considered how *Paul* followed the truth in practise, and with what hazard he profest it, might conceive that his conversation was no dream.

Again, we may refer these words to

Pauls

Pauls particular ſpeech mentioned, *v.* 26, 27. directed in part to *Feſtus*, and in part to *Agrippa*, in which he takes the advantage of defending himſelf both againſt his general charge by the *Jews*, and the particular imputation put upon him by *Feſtus*, *v.* 24. and this he doth by taking hold of two things, which did much conduce to his preſent purpoſe.

The firſt was *Agrippa's* general knowledge of cuſtoms, and memorable ſtories, and eſpecially of the truth of the matter of fact related, and queſtioned, yea cenſured by *Feſtus*.

Secondly, *Agrippa's* general aſſent unto the things contained in the ſcriptures, *v.* 27. Theſe things being handſomly couched in a wiſe and inſinuating apparel, draw out this profeſſion from him, *Then ſaid Agrippa unto Paul, Almoſt thou perſwadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.*

From hence obſerve;

Obſ. 1. It is a great advantage for a Miniſter, when the people he is to deal withal have ſome principles laid beforehand for him to faſten his word unto. This was the advantage that *Paul* had upon *Agrippa*, more then upon the reſt of his Judges; and therefore he applies himſelf moſt to him, and with good ſucceſs.

Obſ. 2. There muſt be much wiſdome

and

and prudence mixt with the dispensing of the Gospel, to know when, how, and to whom to speak, and to espy out every little thing that might further or facilitate our work; this was the craft which *Paul* mentions, 2 *Cor.* 12. 16. *Being crafty I caught you with guile.* He saw *Agrippa* was the fittest person to work upon, and he espied what was in him to lay hold of, therefore he fixes most upon this mark.

Obs. 3. A word of commendation and encouragement sometimes given to the hearer, gaines much respect to the truth it self. Thus we finde that applause which *Paul* gave to *Agrippa*, he returns to the truth which he profest, and declares himself almost overcome with the Majesty and splendor of it, which shined so gloriously in the Apostles Narrative. These things the connexion of the Text with its dependance upon *Pauls* speech affords us. We may consider it also as relating something to *Festus* his censure upon *Pauls* discourse. *Then said Agrippa,* (*viz.*) when *Festus* had but now calumniated the truth which was held forth, and had judged *Pauls* Doctrine and Relation to be but a learned madness, then *Agrippa* stands up to wipe off the reproach which he cast upon the truth. If we consider it with these circumstances of the time and place, when the Gospel had been censured so

so lately by a potent man, and a Ruler, and in the presence of the *Jews* who were the Apostles accuses, and strong enemies of the word he had delivered: Then and there, for *Agrippa* to make such a Declaration as this in favour of the truth, was much; considering it thus, we may observe,

First, the Lord doth oftentimes provide some to stand up for the truth and the Professors of it in greatest straits, who yet never receive it themselves.

Secondly, what great convictions do fall upon the spirits of some men, who yet are never savingly wrought upon. It must needs be conceived, that the impressions were strong upon *Agrippa*'s spirit, that they extorted from him such an open profession as this is, at such a time and in such a place. But this truth will come more fully under our consideration from the words themselves; onely this circumstance may give some light to that which lies so open in the Text it self.

Chap. II.

The Doctrine propounded with the general proof of it.

WE have then in the words three things.

First,

First, the impression which *Pauls* doctrine made upon *Agrippa*; it wrought by way of perswasion, *Thou perswadest me.*

Secondly, The object of this perswasion, that is, embracing and professing the gospel of Christ.

Thirdly, the measure of this perswasion, *Almost.*

Almost, ἐν ὀλίγῳ, in *parvo*, in a little, or something I should be a Christian with thee. *Paul* seems to take him in this sence, when he wishes that he were as he, καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ καὶ ἐν πολλῷ not onely in little, but in much; not onely in some things, but in all.

Some read it δι' ὀλίγου, and they understand χρόνου, or λόγου, that is, thou hast perswaded me in a little time, or by a short speech to be a Christian. Some translaters render it by *propemodum*, and ours follow them, and it is very safe, almost or within a little thou perswadest me.

Perswadest me, πείθεις, it signifies both *suadere, & persuadere*, either to use meanes to bring a man to our opinion, or practise by arguments and exhortations, or else to pravail upon the party, and bring him to what we desire.

First, Sometimes it is taken for exhorting and reasoning only, *Acts* 18. 4. *He reasoned in the synogogue every Sabbath, and perswaded the Jews and the Greeks.* This was *Co-*

nantis

tantis potius quam efficientis; he endeavoured what he did not effect: but this could not be the sense of *Agrippa* here, for *Paul* had used no particular exhortation to him.

Secondly, it signifies to prevaile upon, and to bring a person to rest in what we say, and so is taken here; for it must needs note the influence that *Pauls* discourse had upon *Agrippa*, insomuch that it brought him to assent unto what he said, and to professe himself even almost ready to joyn with him in professing the same things.

To be a Christian, that is, to become a Disciple and follower of Jesus Christ. I shall present you with my thoughts of these words as they were presented to me in our Translation, and as we read them, they afford this Observation.

Obs. Men may be almost that never will be altogether Christians; they may be almost such in respect of their perswasions, who will never be such in respect of their practise and performance.

In handling the Doctrinal Observation which I have propounded, I shall

First, lay down something for the general proof of this.

Secondly, I shall particularly open and illustrate it.

Thirdly, I shall apply it:

That this is a truth, is clear from many instances

inſtances and examples in the Scripture. How far did *Saul* go, the firſt King of *Iſrael*, (I wiſh he had been the laſt example of this truth) he bid fairer for Heaven then many do that have ſtorng confidence of it. He ſeemed to be good among good men, 1 *Sam.* 10. 10. he propheſied among the Prophets; nay he ſeems to be good by way of ſingularity; he oppoſes ſin when the whole ſtream ran againſt him, and ſeems exceeding tender of the ſins of others, 1 *Sam.* 14. 33, 34. yea he ſeems to be ſo zealous againſt ſin that he would not ſpare his dear *Jonathan*, 1 *Sam.* 14. 44. there was (1 *Sam.* 10. 6. ſuch a change upon him as was viſible, and made him another man, yea this change was ſo deep, that it reached to the very heart of him; it is ſaid 1 *Sam.* 10. 9. God gave him *another heart*, yet this was not a thorow change, he had not a *new* heart, though *another* heart; neither was *Saul* a *new* man, though *another* man.

The young man in the Goſpel may be brought as a clear and pregnant teſtimony of this truth, *Mat.* 19. 20. ſee how far he went; he obſerved all the commands of God, and not willing to ſtop here, he profeſſes his deſire to know and do more yet: *What lack I yet?* this man went ſo far, that Chriſt himſelf ſayes of him that he was not far from the kingdom of God; yet ſo near as he came to it, he never reaches it. To

To this you may add the three ſorts of bad hearers, which are condemned by Chriſt under the notion of bad ground, *Luke* 8. 12, 13, 14. the worſt of the three did more then barely hear the word; they did receive it, and that into their hearts; for it is ſaid of the ſtony ground (which was worſt of the three) that the devil took the word, (not before it came at their hearts) but out of their hearts; he did not take their hearts away, ſo that they minded not what was ſpoken, as he doth many mens and womens, but he took it away after they had received it. Both the other go thus far, and ſomewhat farther; for their reception of the word is noted with ſome additional circumſtances, as the ſecond received it with joy, and did not loſe it preſently, till in tract of time cares and pleaſures choaked it; the third yet exceeded both theſe, for it received, kept and improved the Word, in bringing forth ſome fruits, only it was not to perfection. If all this be not ground enough to build this concluſion upon, look to the foolish Virgins, and ſee how far they go in this point, and how like they were to the wiſe, *Mat.* 25. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c.

Firſt, as for their profeſſion, it was viſible, they had lamps in their hands.

Secondly, this was not an ignorant profeſſion neither, for they had oyl in their

Lamp, some illumination, and some convictions to keep this profession alive.

Thirdly, their profession was not without practice, intimated in these expressions,

First, *They went*: they were upon some motion, they did perform some duties, and observe Ordinances.

Secondly, *They went forth*, (*viz.*) they left many behind them, they went out from that condition of life in which they had lived, and they took up another course.

Thirdly, they associated themselves with those who did in truth fear God; they *accompanied the wise Virgins*.

Fourthly, they complyed with their design, and profest themselves the followers of Christ, they went *to meet the Bridegroom*.

Fifthly, they did in every thing behave themselves so like the wise Virgins, that they were not discerned, nor suspected by the wise Virgins; the coming of Christ first detected them.

Sixthly, their confidence held out unto the very last; for when the Bridegroom came they rose to trim their Lamps, thinking to go in with the other, but were deceived.

Lastly, there was nothing wanting but that which was invisible, *viz. oyl in their vessels*: they wanted grace in their hearts, and therefore though these came thus nigh to the very door of Heaven; and cry *Lord*,

Lord open to us, yet it is in vain; Christ answers them as strangers, *I know you not*; if there needed any thing more to make this proposition clear, I could instance in *Judas* and *Demas*, and others who went beyond these also, being not onely professors, but preachers of the truth to others. But it is needless to insist longer upon the proof of that which the many sad experiences and examples of our present age hath made so manifest. How many hath this Age brought forth of this kind, who have climbed high in profession, but have fallen from the most visible glorious appearance of godliness to the most abominable prophaneſſe, to be as conscientiously vile as ever they were strict. This shall serve for the general proof, by which you may see that this is a truth which I have propounded.

Chap. III.

The Doctrine more particularly explained.

That this may be the better understood I shall make enquiry into these two things.

First, what kind of perswasions men may have, which yet are not gracious.

Secondly, from whence these do arise; and in this I shall consider two things.

First,

Firſt, whence it is that they extend ſo far.

Secondly, why they reach no farther.

For the firſt, what kind of perſwaſions theſe are, which yet prove not effectual to the bringing men over to Chriſt, it is neceſſary to ſhew you firſt what Perſwaſion is: a perſwaſion is a moral bending of the judgement or will to truth, or goodneſſe, which are their proper objects, whether they be real or apparent; it is ſometimes taken for the inclining of the judgement, the bringing of any one to reſt in what we ſay; ſo it ſignifies as much as conviction of a truth; and if this be very full and clear, then it imports as much as aſſurance; ſo it is taken, *Rom* 8.38. *I am perſwaded*, that is, I am aſſured, *that nothing ſhal be able to ſeparate us from the love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* I do not heſitate or doubt at all about this: thus it reſpects the underſtanding and judgement.

Secondly, it is taken (and that moſt commonly) for the working over the Will to ſome duty or deſigne, either good in it ſelf, or made ſo to appear; thus it is uſed, *Acts* 13.43. and *chap.* 18. 13. and ſo in this place. This perſwaſion reſted in the Will, and had for its end, Action, following of Chriſt.

In the firſt ſenſe *Man* may be ſaid to perſwade; The underſtanding and judge-

ment lie more open and naked, and one mans reason does give light to anothers.

But in the second (if we take it in reference to the chief good) it is *Gods* prerogative only to perswade; he only can penetrate the Will, and turn it to its proper object, *Ps.* 110.3 *In the day of thy power thy people shal be willing.* Therefore *Noah* praying for, or propheſying of *Japhets* condition, ſays thus, *Gen.* 9. 27. The Lord perſwade *Japhet, and he ſhal dwel in the tents of Shem:* we read it ordinarily, *The Lord enlarge Japhet,* but it may be as wel rendered, perſwade him. The word is *Japht, of Patach, aperuit,* it ſignifies properly to open a thing, and Metaphorically to perſwade, becauſe the heart muſt be opened in perſwading. Now when *Noah* prays that the Gentiles which came of *Japhet* ſhould be brought into the Church, which was to be ſetled in the Family of *Shem*, he prays that God would open their hearts, and effectually perſwade them, for he was onely ſufficient in this matter.

But to come nearer to the buſineſſe in hand, we are to conſider what kind of perſwaſions unregenerate men may have; if we look to the firſt kind for thoſe which reſpect the underſtanding and judgement, they may go very far; and ſo far, that they may ſeem not only *almoſt*, but *altogether*

ther Chriſtians. The judgement and reaſon may be for God, and may aſſent to every thing that is good, when the Will is for nothing that is good. As for example, I ſhall enumerate ſome particulars.

Firſt, they may be perſwaded of the evil of their own wayes; this the very Gentiles knew who had not the Law. God had left them ſo much light that aroſe and accuſed them when they did evil, *Rom.* 2. 15. it ſtood up in the place of God, and cenſured their abominations; if thoſe who had no Law, had yet an accuſer; ſurely then much more thoſe who have both Law and Goſpel cannot but have ſome ſecret intimations and checks with ſome gripings of conſcience when they break out into ſuch ſins which the light of nature, and the Word of the Lord do ſo palpably condemn, I am perſwaded that the Drunkard, Swearer, Lyer, Sabbath-breaker, the man that neglects Prayer, Reading, and Meditation, do not think theſe wayes of theirs are good; they walk up and down as ſelf-condemned perſons.

Secondly, they may ſee not onely the evil of their wayes, but alſo the danger of them; they have ſome glances and hints, yea and ſometimes foretaſts of the ſad end of theſe things. They are convinct of the inſeparable and juſt connexion that is be-

twixt ſin and miſery; they ſee that they are going down to the chambers of death, and that their ſteps take hold of hell, and yet this will not ſtop them, they will have their luſts how dear ſoever they pay for them hereafter. This is evident, *Rom.* 1. 32. *Who knowing the juſt judgement of God, that they who do ſuch things are worthy of death, not onely do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them.* There are three things lie open to them.

Firſt, The judgement of God, that there is ſuch a judgement or ſentence pronunc'd againſt ſuch ſinners.

Secondly, that this ſentence was unto death.

Thirdly, that this was a juſt and righteous judgement; theſe things muſt needs carry with them very great convictions of the demerit of ſin, and the danger of the ſinner.

Thirdly, they may be perſwaded of the neceſſity of a change; this muſt needs ariſe from the two former: he that ſees the evil of his own wayes, together with the danger of them, muſt needs conclude that a change muſt paſſe upon him in order to happineſs; though no unregenerate man does know what that change is which he muſt ſuffer if he will be ſaved; yet many of them know thus much, that they muſt be changed; they are convinc'd that ſomething is to be done

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for Heaven, though they are ignorant of the particulars. I have met with some that have confessed that they could not read or think of that passage of Christ, *John* 3. 3. (*Except a man be born again, he cannot inherit the kingdom of God,*) but it would perplex their thoughts; thus there is (I am perswaded) in many men a confused general notion of Regeneration, though they have not a distinct knowledge of it, and they are convinc'd it is a work which they have not yet experienc'd, without which they cannot be saved. I need not go out of the Congregation for the proof of this: I am confident this is the perswasion of many of you, who know you must be changed, if saved: the Lord grant you may not carry these convictions to hell.

Fourthly, they may be convinc'd of the equity of the wayes of God, and the reasonableness of all his commands, yea and of his judgments. How many are there whose affections serve the devil, and their lusts? who will notwithstanding consent in their judgements to the wayes of God; they will grant when they are urged to it, that there is nothing more equitable then that the creature should be conformed to the will of the Creator, & that he that made us should expect from us a submission to his commands, seeing we depend upon him, and

we ſhould improve and ſpend all that for him, which we receive from him. The very principles of Reaſon will condemn the ſinner as a monſter, and the moſt irregular perſon in the world, who would live without being accountable to God upon whom he depends; this is to blot out the notion of a creature out of his heart; for what reaſonable being could expect this, unleſs he were of himſelf, and could ſubſiſt without any help from another? If you propoſe this to the reaſon of many men, they will confeſs, it is very equitable that the Lord who made us, and by whoſe patience and bounty we ſubſiſt, ſhould put the yoak upon us, and that it is no injuſtice nor exaction in him to require the ſtricteſt obedience of us, ſo that when we conſider any, or all the ways which the Lord preſcribes unto us to walk in towards him, though wee apprehend them as hard and unpleaſant thorough our weakneſs and corruption, yet when we doe but glance upon the ſoveraigne power of God over his creatures, and the dependance of the creatures upon him, we muſt needs ſay, that it is a reaſonable thing, and juſt to fear this God, and to ſubmitt to all that he commands. And as they are convinc'd of the equity and juſtneſs of all his commands to us; ſo they are from hence forced to ſee the juſtice of that ſentence, which ſhall be

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pronounced against all those that despise and refuse the yoke of the Lord, as I hinted before from that of *Rom.* 1.32. For what is more deeply rooted in nature then this Principle that the work should praise the workman, and that the workman should draw forth his own honour and glory from his own? and if these shall refuse to serve the ends of their being, that then he should substract all comfortable influences from them, and turne his hand against them for evil. Now if these things be ingrafted in nature, surely men who have many accessions of light to their naturall principles by the gospel under which they live, will go to hell with a conviction of the equity of those things which the Lord required of them and of the Judgment which he hath past upon them.

V. They may be perswaded of the truth of the threatnings and promises; so that they may be able sometimes to looke into heaven and hell through the truth of God in the one, and the other. Thus *Balaam* saw the reality of those promises which *God* had made to *Israel*, and he saw also the certainty of the fulfilling of all that *God* had spoken against the enemies thereof: thus the eyes of wicked men are sometimes opened, especially of temporary beleevers and such as are almost Christians, that they are cleer-

ly convin'd that there will be a difference betwixt thoſe that fear the Lord, and thoſe that fear him not; they know it will go ill with the wicked; but it will go well with the godly; ſo that when the threats donounced againſt ſuch are opened, they tremble as *Felix* did at the preaching of judgement to come, *Acts* 24.25. They feel ſomething of what is threatned already in their conſciences; the word is as hot as an oven to them, which ſcorches them; & convictions and terrors which from thence fall upon them are like ſtreams of fire breaking out of hell it ſelf; that if we did but ſometimes obſerve, and conſider the impreſſions that are made upon ſuch mens ſpirits, it would put it out of doubt, whether there be a hell or not; and men would conclude that the dreadful things threatned in the Word of God are not ciphers, or things to be played withal, or the inventions of men, onely to keep others in awe, as ſome Atheiſts have believed, but that they are truths whereof one tittle ſhal not fall to the ground unperformed. Theſe things wicked men *know* to be true here, and ſhal *feel* them true hereafter; yea theſe taſtes of the truth of the threatnings make oftentimes great viſible changes in them, and they do much to eſcape the judgement written; thus *Herod* did many things when he heard *John Baptiſt*;

tist; and the Jews being terrified with the sharpnesse of his Ministry, came to him confessing their sins, *Mat.* 3. 6. What says he to them, *You generation of Vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?* as if he had said, Now that hell has flasht in your faces, you come in a fit of terror, and you pretend to be sorrowful for your sins; but let me see such things as will evidence this in after-fruits. Beside this, they are convinc'd of the truth of the promises of God made to his people. And when the terrors which brake in from the threatnings, has made some external change upon them, (mistaking themselves, and taking this which is wrought for a gracious change) they reckon themselves among the regenerate; and reading the promises which are made to these, they confidently apply them to themselves, and that not without abundance of joy. Thus did *Herod*, *Mark* 6.20. when *Johns* Doctrines had made some impressions upon him, and these had made an alteration in his practises and ways, having reformed many things that were amiss, now he hears *John* gladly, and he greedily catches at all the sweet promises which *John* dropt at any time to such as did obey the truth, saying in his heart, These are mine, and this made him hear with delight. Thus the stony ground received

the word with joy, which must needs arise from some promises misapplyed, and some good laid hold on, which did not belong to them, whereby they apprehended that their condition was much advanced; they rejoyced in the Heaven and happinesse which the promises held forth to the Saints, (which they could not do unlesse they had believed them) but they were unwilling to go thorow a believers hell to his Heaven; therefore in time of persecution they fell away, hence it is that some are said to have tasted of the powers of the world to come, *Heb.* 6. 5. that is, they are convinc'd of the excellent priviledges of the Saints, both in this life, and especially in that to come, as that they shall have communion with *God* the Father, Son, and Spirit, with Angels, and all the Saints. They may be perswaded of the excellent state of the Saints then in respect of the glory which shall be put upon their souls and bodies, their freedome from evil, and the accession of all good things. Now though they have not a true taste of these priviledges, and they know not what grace is, and the pleasure of communion with *God* is, yet they being perswaded that such things are, having found a joy in their false hopes, and counterfeit graces which they have

have judged to be foretaſtes of Heaven, they have been forc'd to acknowledge that this falſe joy was yet better then all the pleaſures of their ſins, and hence they have been ſtrongly perſwaded of the truth of Gods promiſes made to his people, though they do not belong to them; this is the caſe of many men, who by the perſwaſions of the truth of the threats and promiſes, do not learn to eſcape the one, and to enjoy the other; and they ſay under theſe perſwaſions as he did, *Luke* 14. 15. *Bleſſed is he that ſhal eat bread in the kingdom of God*, yet themſelves never come there.

VI. They may be perſwaded of the ſweetneſſe of *Gods* ways, and that thoſe who follow him have their pleaſure, yea more pleaſure then men can have in ſin; it is ſaid therefore they received the word with joy, *Luke* 8. 13. and *Iſaiah* 58 2. They delighted in approaching unto *God*; hence it is ſaid, *Heb.* 6. 5. That they taſted of the good word of *God*, they taſted of the goodneſſe of the word, and having taſted it, they accounted it good. Now we know that the taſte counts nothing good but that which is ſweet, though other ſenſes do count bitter things good, for they may be beautiful, and ſo good to the eye, and fragrant

grant, ſo good to the ſmelling, but the palate commends ſweetneſs.

Now carnal men may finde a ſweetnes in the ways of *God* as is evident,

First, becauſe the bare performance of ſome duties, and reforming of ſome ſins, may give much eaſe to conſcience, and procure much reſt from the troubles with which it was before overwhelmed: ſo that comparing their lives with what they were before, they do account them much more pleaſant then when they lived in the height of ſin, becauſe they had then many gripings of conſcience which ſpoiled all their mirth; now though they have but a falſe peace, yet it is ſweeter then their former life.

Secondly, they account the ways of God ſweet, becauſe they have not only a ceſſation from their former troubles, but they have alſo many times a great preſumption of Gods love, and of the pardon of ſin, and of eternal life; ſo that they are as it were wrapt up out of the body, and perhaps in a fit out of the world, that they can ſet a low eſteem upon theſe alſo for a time.

Thirdly, they eſteem the ways of God ſweet, becauſe they finde now an increaſe of knowledge, and of gifts by exerciſing themſelves in them: ſo that the knowledge that they get under the word, makes the word ſeem ſweet unto them, and they rejoyce in

in it, *Joh.* 5.35. Knowledge is pleasant, even of that which we do not love; so that while this increaseth the soul is delighted, *Isa.* 58.2. they delighted in knowing, but not in doing, and as the word my seem sweet for the knowledge which is gotten by it: so may prayer because of gifts and parts increased by it; Thus they may be convinced of the sweetness of Gods ways, so far that they are carried forth sometimes to prefer the ways of God before the ways of men, and the people of God before the men of the world, as *Balaam* was, *Numb.* 24.5. *How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!* The Lord is pleased to shew carnal men that which they never enjoy; yea they feel sometimes that which they soon forget. They have some glances of the happiness which the Saints enjoy in communion with God, though they have none with him; yet some such workings there are sometimes upon hypocrites, that they finde something which seems like it, and brings them in much comfort, which although it be not true and lasting, yet it serves to convince them that there is a sweetnesse in the ways of God, and they can say, Blessed is he that is in such a case, yea, blessed is he whose God is the Lord: upon all these accounts they are in the main perswaded there is a sweetne[ss]

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in the ways of the Saints, though they do all the while mistake it, and are strangers to that comfort which the Saints find in duties, when they think they do enjoy them. The ways of God themselves are not sweet, but there is a sweetness squeezed out of them which refreshes them, so that upon the whole, they are satisfied in this, that it is a more comfortable life (all things considered) to live in the strict performances of the godly, then in the loose practises of the wicked; yet these men that come thus far, may not be altogether Christians.

7*ly*. They may be perswaded of things that are excellent, and may be able to judge betwixt things that differ, yea so far skill'd in the nature of things, that they may be able to instruct others in spiritual matters: they may have some insight into all the ways of God, in which his people walk; so that they may be able to direct the weak, and quicken the dull, yea and to set things out with some eminency, *Rom.* 2 18. *Knowing and approving the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the Law.* Thus a man may not onely see or shew what is a duty, but the excellency of it, by which he has the advantage of exciting others to it; yea he may not only shew how much more excellent grace, and the exercise of it is

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then ſin, but if any grace more excellent, or duty then other, he may diſcern the reſpective and comparative excellency, that is in one more then in another, and yet have no true grace himſelf. Thus we ſee men in their judgements may be for God in many things, yea in ſo many things, that it is hard to ſhew in what they may not be for him, and yet their wils and affections ſtand at a vaſt diſtance; you ſee the judgement may be ſwayed much, and in this reſpect a man may be *almoſt a Chriſtian.* I am now to enquire concerning the Will, how far that may be inclined; and although every unregenerate perſon is defective here, and it is the will that lies behind in theſe imperfect perſwaſions; yet the Will is not without ſome motions: he wils ſome things, and does many things, as *Herod* and others did. Let us enquire a little concerning thoſe perwaſions which reach the will, yet imperfectly.

CHAP. IV.

How far the Will may be perſwaded.

FIrſt, ſome are ſo far perſwaded to be Chriſtians, that they reſolve to comply with all thoſe convictions which I ſhewed you they might have, and they deter-

termine with themſelves that they *will* be Chriſtians, though *not yet*; *they ſtick at nothing but the time*; they are fully perſwaded that they muſt be changed; ſuch a ſin muſt be left, and ſuch a duty muſt be taken up. They confeſſe that Repentance and mortification of particular corruptions are neceſſary things, and they reſolve with themſelves, that they will practiſe theſe, but they cannot agree upon the time; I will do this ſays one, when I am old, or when I am ſick, ſays another; then I would willingly be as ſtrict and holy as the beſt. Others they crave a leſs time; the next year ſays one, I will become a new man; perhaps another reſolves upon the next moneth, a third craves but a weeks liberty more, a fourth but a day; nay perhaps a man may ſo far comply with his convictions, that he may reſolve to do ſomething the next hour, and yet as neer as theſe come up to a complyance with the command of God, they never obey it. See an example of this *Luke* 9.59.61. One ſays, *I will but go and bury my Father*; this might have been done in a day, the other ſays, *I will but go and bid my friends farewel, and then I will come and follow thee*, and this was but an hours work; but Jeſus who ſees not as man ſees, diſcerns the diſtance at which their hearts ſtood from him all this while under

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these fair perswasions; he saw that he and they were never like to meet, as near as they seemed to be. He knew that these would never bid enough for Heaven, as fair as they offered; therefore he presently falls upon a discourse to shew how unfit such merchants were for him, as if he had said to the standers by, You think that I have gotten two Disciples; here are two that wil follow me without dispute. But you are mistaken; there is a greater difference betwixt them and me then you see; this difference about the time is like to part me and them eternally; for if they were fully resolved to follow me, they would follow me now; these delayes and promises for to morrow are but a smoother kind of denial then others do give.

Secondly, some are so far perswaded that they would be Christians, *but not in all places*, they would be Christians in publick, but not in private; they will go so far in profession as others do; they would willingly submit to those things which coms under common observation; that which is visible in others, they would willingly have to be manifest in them. The form of godliness is obvious to all, but the power of godliness is a secret thing, and consists in secret duties which others see not, as in closet-duties, secret Prayer and medi-

meditation, and heart-examination; these things they will not touch withall. Such were in *Ezekiels* time, who would have past for Gods people in the Congregation, *Eze.* 33.30,31. they sat there as Gods people, and they heard the word of the Lord, and they took delight in so doing; this they were in publick; but what were they in private? see *Ezek.* 8.7,8,9. Abominable Idolaters, thus men will be Saints in one place, and devils in another; when they come to hear the Word, they would carry a semblance with them; here they will be for Christ; but what do they carry of this to their families? there is no sense nor savour of those truths which they are affected with under the Ordinance; or if they carry a little of this into their families, and then repeat what they hear, or confer of it with others, yet follow them to their secret Chambers, do they carry the impressions of truth thither? do they examine themselves by it there? do the pray over what they hear there where no eye sees them? surely no. Can their private retirements witness for them at last that they have been sensible of their own sins, and the sins of others? can the tears dropt there for the sins of the place speak for them? can their bed-sides testifie for them that they poured out their souls by them unto God with strong

strong and daily cries? can the darkness of the night bear them record that their meditations have been of God, and that they have been laying of designs for the honouring of God in their places and stations in which God hath set them? O my friends, consider these things, and examine your selves whether you have not been as *Jehu*, zealous for God before men, that you may have even said by your gesture and behaviour, Come see my zeal for the Lord; and yet in private you have minded nothing more then he did, the seeking of your selves, and the establishment of your own houses; oh when you come into your closets, and to your bed-sides, you should blush and be ashamed to think how much you differ there from your selves here. Here you pretend your selves to be the servants of God, and there you profess your selves the servants of the world; oh how few of those truths have you weighed and considered of there, which you have been convinced of here; when you come there, you see your books of accounts in one place, your bils of parcels in another, your Letters in another: think how much time you have spent here in your haire, and how little upon your knees; here you have been mornings early, and evenings late, but not with your Bible before

fore you, nor at prayer or meditation upon ſpiritual matters, but at the affairs of trade. I tell you that theſe things will riſe up in judgement againſt you, and condemn you at laſt, and God wil judge you not by what you are before men, but by what you are before him in ſecret, for it is this that he moſt obſerves, *Matth.* 6. 4. 6. 18. *He ſees in ſecret*, that is, he onely ſees in ſecret, this is his prerogative, or he ſees and regards principally what men do in ſecret; he values more that which men do behind mens backs, then what they do before their faces; he ſees ſo in ſecret, that if men be not the ſame in ſecret that they are in publick, he will take no notice of it; Upon this account he would not know thoſe Formaliſts mentioned *Matth.* 6. 16. This will be enough to prove you to be but Chriſtians in part, in that you are not Chriſtians in ſecret. *That a man is, that he is when he is alone*; that which a man thinks of, deſignes for, and delights in moſt in private, that ſhews what a man is.

Thirdly, ſome are perſwaded to be Chriſtians, *but not amongſt all perſons*; they will be good amongſt the good, but not amongſt the evil; they can ſwim down the ſtream with the godly, but not up the ſtream; like *Peter* they will profeſſe while they are amongſt the Diſciples, that they will

will die with Chriſt; but when they are amongſt thoſe that deny him, they will not know the man. They are not able to ſtand before the breath of a ſcorner; one that ſcoffs at Religion beats them out of their profeſſion. How many be there that will profeſſe Chriſt very far amongſt profeſſors, where it is a credit to own God, who yet will be aſhamed of this, when they fall amongſt thoſe who will reproach his ways? then either they joyn with the ſcorner, and deny Chriſt, or elſe ſtand ſtill in a baſe neutrality, and betray profeſſion by their ſilence, as if there were a guilt in it. Thus *Saul* would be a Prophet amongſt the Prophets, but when he comes into his Family, the evil ſpirit ſeizeth upon him; but ſurely ſuch as theſe will be found too light when they are weighed in the ſcales. Obſerve that of our Saviour, *Mark* 8 38. *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in that adulterous and ſinful Generation, of him alſo ſhall the ſon of man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his father with the bleſſed Angels.* Chriſt will own thoſe, and thoſe only, who have owned him before wicked men, before ſcoffers and ſcorners, and ſuch as labour to bring ſhame and contempt upon all that own God; therefore ſays Chriſt, it is not he that confeſſes me now, and favours

vours me ſecretly, or openly before theſe who profeſſe themſelves followers of me and my word that ſhall then be countenanc'd, if he be aſhamed of me before thoſe who labour to make all men aſhamed of me. Oh conſider this you that would be accounted good amongſt them that ſet an high eſteem upon good men: but if you meet with thoſe that ſcoff at goodneſs, you are for them too; you are ſilent at leaſt when the ways, and name, and people of God are blaſphemed or reproached, eſpecially if it be a friend, or a cuſtomer, or a great man; then you muſt ſay as they ſay, or at leaſt ſay nothing to the contrary. Remember what Chriſt hath ſaid, and how he will look upon you as being the ſhame of profeſſion, and of his name, when he comes in his glory; how do you expect to be juſtified before all the world, who dared not to be good in all places, and all companies?

IV. Some are ſo far perſwaded that they will be Chriſtians *in reſpect of the whole viſibility of profeſſion, but they will not take up the power and ſpirituality of it*; they will reform ſo far, that they will cleanſe the outſide, abſtain from all viſible ungodlineſs, yea and take the form of godlineſs too, as the Apoſtle mentions ſome who did ſo, 2 *Tim.* 3. 5. *Having a form of godlineſs, and yet they did deny the power*; that is,

is, they did refuse to stoop to the power of it; there are two parts of Religion; the form which is visible, and lies open to men; this consists in reforming the outward man, the denying of ungodliness and wordly lusts; this is the negative part. It lies also in a performance of all those duties which come under the observation of others, as hearing the Word, reading, conferring of it, praying in the publick, and in our families, with a sober and unblameable conversation towards men. All this a man may submit unto, and yet be but almost a Christian. For there is yet another part of Religion which is the very soul of it; and this lies hid from the eyes of others, and consists in two things principally. First, in the performance of secret duties, as self-denial, self-tryal and examination, watchfulness over their hearts and thoughts, mortifying of inward corruptions. Secondly, it consisteth in the frame and bent of the heart, in these and all other duties towards God. The main of Religion lies here in fearing and loving of God. These are things which men may, and do often omit and passe over, who yet do embrace the whole body and outside of Godliness. Praying, Reading, Hearing are but the Cabinet which contain this Jewel. But godliness consisteth in a right and true disposi-

tion of the heart under these. Now if Christianity did imply no more then most men conceive it doth, if it were only an abstaining from gross and common pollutions of the world, and taking up of all those duties which are commonly confest to be such, by men professing themselves Christians, they would be Christians altogether. But the Lord will find amongst those that perform the duties which make men visible Christians, and submit to all his Ordinances, many that are but almost Christians at the most, and that upon this account, because they never attended unto the spirituality of duties. They prayed and heard the word, & received the Sacraments, but they were carnal still; their old hearts did continue; their practices were changed, but their principles and their interests were the same still; their faces were turned but not their affections; the one stood towards God, but the other was toward some lust or other.

Fifthly, Some would be Christians *in all things, till it come to the beloved sin*, till it come to profit and losse, and when they are touched here, they cry out, The Lord pardon me in this one thing. If the Minister press at any time upon men the necessity of an universal change, they mistake it, and think that by this universal we mean a general

general change, that is, a change in the greater and more viſible part; A leaving the greater number of known ſins, and a ſubmitting to the greater number of known duties; they think no rule ſo general, but admits of ſome exceptions in particulars. They think one ſin may be reſerved without prejudice to their cloſing with Chriſt, and think they may hold faſt enough with one hand upon him, though they keep the other to take hold of ſin and vanity. If at any time they apprehend the truth as bent againſt the toleration of any ſin, and they ſee a neceſſity of parting with *Dalilah*, or Heaven, then they ſay, This is a hard ſaying, who can hear it? They would willingly be followers of Chriſt, if he would give them a diſpenſation for ſome things which they account but ſmall: though the leaſt ſin is too big to lie with Chriſt in the heart. How many do part with Chriſt upon this point, when he comes to croſs their profit and gain, who yet are troubled to loſe him, and go away like the young man, *Mat.* 19. 22. with tears in their eyes! they will do much rather then live without hopes of Heaven, till it come to the cutting off the right hand or foot, or plucking out of the right eye; this is like the way in which *Barnabas* and *Paul* parted. Chriſt and they go together in many things, but when they come here they muſt needs part.

VI. Some are ſo far perſwaded to be Chriſtians, *that they are aſhamed to be reckoned amongſt the oppoſers of Religion.* They abhor the ſeat of the ſcorner, and will not willingly hear godlineſs derided; they are convinc'd of the happineſſe of thoſe that fear God, and are convinc'd who they are, they would willingly be accounted favourers of ſuch, and wiſh they were in their conditions: yet notwithſtanding all theſe things, ſomething holds them from coming up fully to their ſteps; either they are poſſeſt with a ſluggiſh ſpirit, and will not ſet themſelves forth in the duties of a Chriſtian, or elſe they are ſecretly glued to the world, and will not run the hazards of Chriſtians. One plays the ſluggard under his convictions, and cries out thus, I would fain have knowledge, but I cannot allow the time to ſearch the ſcriptures, nor to read goods Books, nor to frequent the company and conferences of the people of God; another ſays, I approve of Prayer, it is a duty, but I have not parts nor praying gifts; theſe are but idle excuſes of hearts that will not come up to God fully; for were your hearts ſet to know God, you would find time enough out of your idle and unneceſſary buſineſſes to ſeek after knowledge, nay you would cut it out of your time that you ſpend in eating, drinking,

king, and ſleeping; have you not borrowed ſome time from theſe to ſatisfie your luſts? and for you who pretend an excuſe for the omitting and neglecting of duties in your Families, and in private, which you are convinc'd ought to be done, and you think to ſalve it with this that you have no parts; alas this is a fiction in ſome, and a vain excuſe in all that plead it.

For 1. Have you not abilities to expreſs your preſent apprehenſions, and conceptions to all men you meet with all, and converſe with? are you not able to ſpeak appoſitely and readily in buying and ſelling? you that can expreſs what you conceive of all matters that come before you, may conclude that neglect of prayer does not ariſe from a defect of expreſſion.

2. If God ſhould take you, and ſhake you over hell, and you had but eminent and deep impreſſions of your danger herein, you would ſurely then pray and cry; you would finde words if you did feel your wants, or apprehend your danger; it is nothing that you want but impreſſion.

3. Do you not ſee men abundantly beneath you in parts and natural abilities, that yet are able to come to God with boldneſs, ſpeak out their own and others wants freely to God?

4. "Know, it is not parts but grace that

"fits a man for duty. I never knew any that "were wrought upon truly, how ever weak "in parts, but was able to Pray without a "Book; and I do believe that the ſpirit of "Prayer is an inſeparable fruit of the work "of grace, *Zach.* 12. 10. *Rom.* 8. 15. And "that a man may as well live without "breath, as he can be a Chriſtian without "the ſpirit of prayer.

V. Be thy parts never ſo low & weak, yet uſe them for God, & he will augment them, *Mat.* 25. 29. *To him that hath ſhall be given.* Grace will bring with it ſuch gifts as are of abſolute neceſſity to maintain a communion with God, and ſuch is the ſpirit of Prayer: never any man did conſcientiouſly uſe weak and tender parts for God, but like the bread which Chriſt brake for the multitude, they did increaſe upon his hands in breaking.

Beſides, theſe which are hindered by a ſlothful ſluggiſh ſpirit, others come not up fully to the life of Chriſtians, from a ſecret tie which is betwixt them and the world; they are loth to hazard their peace or credit amongſt men. Many men notwithſtanding they are convinc'd of the ways of God, and how they ought to walk, yet are ſo ſtudious of a peaceable quiet being in the world, and ſo covetous of every ones good word, that they had rather venture the

the loſs of Heaven, then the diſpleaſing of any man; they will be for godlineſs in their opinion, and they will own the people of God, until it comes to this, that they muſt appear, they muſt ſhew themſelves, and this will diſpleaſe ſuch a friend, and ſuch a neighbour, and they ſhall ſuffer by being counted a man of this or that party; this makes them draw in, as the Phariſees did, who believed, but yet would not profeſſe Chriſt; they would ſhew any under-hand kindneſſe to him, but they would not be openly ſeen to be his followers, eſpecially where their peace or credit would be impaired, *John* 12.42. *Nevertheleſſe, among the chief Rulers alſo many beleeved on him, but becauſe of the Phariſees, they did not confeſſe him, leſt they ſhould be put out of the ſynagogue:* Thus you ſee many men go far, not onely in reſpect of conviction, but alſo of compliance with the truth and ways of God, and they ſeem to moſt men to be altogether Chriſtians, and to the beſt of men to be almoſt ſuch, and yet they are as far from being that which they would be accounted, and what others deſire they would be, as *Agrippa* here was from being a Chriſtian, who was never ſuch. Thus I have finiſhed the firſt head, and have ſhewen you what kind of perſwaſions theſe are which are found in ſuch as are termed almoſt Chriſtians.

The next thing which was propoſed to be opened, is the ſpring and riſe of theſe perwaſions; in which I am to conſider,

Firſt, the extent of theſe.

Secondly, the defects of them; and here I am to ſhew you whence it is that carnal men are ſo far perſwaded, that they ſeem to be almoſt Chriſtians, and then how it comes to paſs, that being brought ſo far, they do not prove altogether Chriſtians.

CHAP. V.

Whence theſe perſwaſions do ariſe.

WHen we conſider the thick darkneſs that is in the underſtanding naturally, and that groſs oppoſition and enmity that is in the will againſt God, and his ways, we may juſtly wonder how it comes to paſs, that any truth gets into the former, and that it ſhould find any kinde of complyance or favourable entertainment in the latter; yet conſulting with experience, we may ſee that the truth doth get into the underſtanding by way of conviction, and into the will by way of perſwaſion, and works to a very great height both ways in thoſe who yet do not graciouſly ſubmit unto it, and obey it from the heart, and if we lay our reaſon to our experience, we way perceive that this ariſeth.

1. *From the relicks of light that are found in the natural conſcience, Prov.20.27. The underſtanding of a man is the candle of the Lord.* The Lord ſet up a light that ſhined glorioufly in the ſoul at firſt, and caſt her beams far and near, ſo that it was able to ſee a far off: and all the off-ſprings of his reaſon, even down to a thouſand Generations, were yet pure, and full of light; ſo that although man had made a thouſand inferences from one principle, the laſt had been as full of light and clearneſs as the firſt. The ſoul has now loſt that vigour and ſtrength to diſcern things remote; yet ſhe is not wholly without light, but as a candle ſhews thoſe things which are neer it very plainly, though ſuch as are remote, weakly or not at all: ſo that light which was once in man, and did like the ſun ſend forth his beams to the remoteſt parts of the horizon, now being weak and languiſhing, diſcovers onely ſome few things. The ſoul does ſtill retain ſome of its firſtborn notions, which do ſhine forth in pure and unſpotted beams, full of convincing light, and of undoubted truth, in which all agree. Jew, and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free; theſe are the common principles which boil up in every man, and do riſe with that ſtrength and clearneſs that none can fully ſtop them

who have induſtriouſly endeavoured it. Such as theſe:

Firſt, that there is a God.

Secondly, that the ſoul is immortal.

Thirdly, that there is a Law by which man ought to ſtear all his actions; and as they do agree or diſagree with this, ſo they are to be accounted good or evil.

Fourthly, that this God who gives Laws to all creatures, eſpecially to man is juſt, and will in Juſtice puniſh thoſe who will fully break his Laws; Theſe are truths which we may find in the conſciences of all men that have no light, but that of nature. *Rom.* 1.32. *Who knowing the judgement of God, (that they which commit ſuch things are worthy of death) not onely do the ſame, but have pleaſure in them that do them*, *Rom.*2.14,15. *When the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law: theſe having not the law, are a law unto themſelves, which ſhew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo bearing witneſſe, and their thoughts the mean while accuſing or elſe excuſing one another*: Nay, if the Scripture ſaid nothing of the compliance of the Heathen with them, they themſelves would abundantly teſtifie their agreement with the Scriptures in theſe things. I might raiſe all the Philoſophers out of their graves to hiſs the Atheiſts of this Age out of the world,

world, who would deny thoſe to be men that denyed a God, and would reckon thoſe as beaſts, and worſe, that would queſtion the immortality of the ſoul, or whether the creature ſhould receive a law from his Creator; or that ſhould claim to themſelves a liberty to do what they liſt, as if there were no ſtandard to meaſure good and evil by. The Heathen would make many practical Atheiſts to bluſh at laſt, who could ſay, *Non ſolum jus & injuria a natura dijudicantur, ſed omnia omnino honeſta & turpia; nam & communis intelligentia nobis res notas efficit, ea quæ in animis noſtris inchoavit ut honeſta in virtute ponantur, in vitiis turpia.* We are not only able (ſays he) to judg of right and wrong betwixt man and man; but we are able to diſcern what is good, and what is evil, and all this by the light of nature. God has made ſuch indelible ſtamps and impreſſions of theſe firſt principles upon mans reaſon, that till he be extreamly corrupted, or judicially hardened, he diſcovers a tranſcendent excellency in goodneſs, and an infamous blot upon wickedneſs; yea they who for the love of ſin (that they might enjoy it quietly,) have laboured to ſilence theſe firſt whiſperings of nature, and to blot out what the finger of God hath written upon their hearts, have but laboured to waſh the Blackamore white; & when

the Atheiſt in practiſe has laboured to be ſo in opinion, he has been but a Sceptick at laſt; theſe truths (like nature under force) return upon them again, and they are ſometimes conſtrained to fear the Deity that they flout at, and to dread him that they have oft denied. Now ſeeing it is thus, that ſuch ſeeds of the knowledge of good and evil are left in every mans heart naturally, it may well be, and does very oft fall out, that when men come under the word (before they have ſinned away this light, and are brought to a deadly Palſie) by that oil which the ordinances do add to this lamp, and by acceſſion of more light from the ſame, men ſee theſe things more clearly, and many things more, which were too remote, to be diſcovered by their firſt light; Hence it comes to paſs that he that by the light of nature ſaw that there was a God, now ſees ſomething of the nature of God, of his worſhp, and is inſtructed in this; he that ſaw that the ſoul was immortal, and that there was a bleſſedneſs or miſery fitted to it, ſees where & what it is. He that ſaw ſin confuſedly, now ſees it more diſtinctly; yea he ſees not only theſe things, but deduceth many things from theſe, and may have a general inſight into all the ways of God, ſo that men meerly inlightned, and having their naturals poliſhed and varniſhed over

by the often rubbing of the Word, may come to great convictions of the truths of God: yea, and theſe convictions may have ſome conſiderable influence upon their wils without the help of grace; by the help of this one thing, which is the nature of every being, it loves and ſeeks his own good; this is the language of every being, *Pſal.* 4. 6. *Who will ſhew us any good.* No man ſeeks evil formally as ſuch, but as it is diſguized by Satan, or dreſt up by his own wanton and corrupt fancy, and made to appear in the habit of goodneſs: as the Witch of *Endor* raiſed up the devil in *Samuels* garments. Thus as men are convinc'd of the good that is in God, and his ſervice, ſo they may from thoſe common convictions ſet themſelves to ſeek him, and apply themſelves to his ways and ordinances. And though no man ſees the chief good in God and his ways, but he that is graciouſly inlightened; yet common light may diſcover a kind of good in God, and in the ſeeking of him; and proportionable to the good they diſcover in ſpiritual things are their perſwaſions to embrace, and endeavours to attain them. Hence many without grace go far, but none far enough to reach the kingdom of God; we have an example of this in the young man, *Matthew* 19, 20. who without ſpecial grace

upon

(upon the ſtock of his natural abilities, with the additional light of the means under which he lived,) went very far in obſervation of the Law, and offered very fair at Heaven, ſeeing doubtleſs a great good in ſalvation; but the reaſon why he went not through with his purchaſe was this, he ſaw not the ſupream good in it; though he apprehended it a good thing to inherit eternal life, yet he ſaw ſomething which to him was better; had this been the chief good in his account, it would have been his chief deſire. And doubtleſs ſeeing all have the ſame ſtock of theſe firſt principles to trade upon, by living under the meanes they may be ſo heightned, that they may ſee (what he did) a degree of goodneſs and happineſs in the enjoyment of ſpiritual things, and may be induced to do, even as he did (having a proportionable meaſure of perſwaſion) to embrace thoſe things, and to comply with the means leading to them. *Theſe are perſwaſions; or elſe they would not be moved to do any thing; they are not full perſwaſions, for then they would ſtick at nothing*: but they are imperfect, & are more or leſs, according to thoſe apprehenſions which they have of the excellency of God, and of his ways, of which the natural man by the light of nature, and the ſuper-added light of the word, may have

have a weak ſight, but without the work of grace cannot have a true ſight, ſuch as ſhould draw him out to ſeek after *God* with all his heart; yet though he ſees not all, he ſees much; and though he will not do all that he is commanded, yet he will be perſwaded to do many things. For though a carnal man cannot apprehend any good in the ſtricteſt profeſſion of godlineſs, which is accompanied with the greateſt ſelf-denial, and expoſes men to the greateſt hazards, yet he dos oft apprehend much good in partial compliance with Religion; for this he ſuppoſes may not ſpoil his particular intereſt, and yet may attain the end, which is true happineſs. Upon this account moſt men have their meaſures of perſwaſion, ſome are greater, & ſome leſs, but ſome do border upon a full perſwaſion, they are almoſt perſwaded, or perſwaded to be *almoſt Chriſtians*.

Secondly. *Theſe perſwaſions do ariſe from good education.* Good counſel & inſtructions being wrought wiſely into them by the skill and induſtry of their Parents or friends; & theſe being backt with good examples, & fenced by diſcipline, produce ſuch effects. Perſons once drawn by love to entertain, or driven by fear to profeſſe what is good, by long cuſtom ſeem to have got a new nature; they act in a profeſſion as if they were

were disposed to it by grace; & whiles they want the temptations which others have, they seem to be fully perswaded to be *Christians*; but when friends or parents are taken away, (who were as a hedg about them, and kept many temptations from approaching neer them) or when they are taken from their friends, and called to live upon their own stock in some place, where they see other examples, & meet with temptations of all sorts, they soon shew what, and whence their former perswasions were: they shew that *ignorance of evil, or want of temptations to it only made them seem good*; But without doubt next unto grace, good education dos most of all work upon the spirits of men, yea it can do any thing but renew the heart: we see how children suck in the opinions and perswasions of their Parents, and ordinarily they do more zealously defend what came from them by tradition then what the light of the word afforded them. Nay it is no very difficult thing for parents to draw their children to imitate them for the examples of those whom we love, perswade to that which for it self we do not love, yea and being drawn once to do any thing in imitation of another whom we honour, we continue in it, left we should be a dishonour to our copie; and thus by continuance we come to be perswaded

swaded of what we do, and arise so high in notion and external profession, that nothing is wanting but the power of those truths which we assent unto, and spirituality of those duties which we perform. *Thus the Parent or the master makes his child or servant almost a Christian; but its the Lord only can make him altogether such.*

Thirdly, *Convictions and perwasions rise high by some special providence.* God knocks so hard at the door of natural mens consciences by some afflictions, or eminent danger of death, that although he does not open the heart as he did *Lydias*, yet he makes a breach, at which some truth enters, which coming in with such conviction and power, for the present (yea and perhaps for the future) makes some changes in the mans apprehensions and resolutions. Thus *Pharoah* himself was convinc'd of the power of God under affliction, whom he would not know in prosperity. When Gods *providences* were *calm*, he *thunders*, as if there were none greater then he; but when God *thunders*, he is *calm*, and is brought by degrees as the storm did increase, to consent to *Moses* demands, though never fully, and with all his heart. *Ahab* when he was terrified with the sharp message of *Elisha*, how does he seem as a man changed, 1 *King.* 21. 27. he puts ashes upon

on his head, girds him with ſackcloth, as a man mortified and dead to this world; yet who that reads the ſtory of *Ahabs* life, judges this to be any more, then the *lightning* which *ſhined* in his *conſcience* while the Prophet *thundred*. Thus we ſee men upon a ſick-bed, while they are under ſtrong apprehenſions and fears of death, yea and of hell too, promiſe much to others, and reſolve much with themſelves, yea and perſwade themſelves that they are in good earneſt, and engage if God ſpare them, that they will be altogether Chriſtians, and give great hopes to others, while the leaſt we can judge of them is, that they are almoſt Chriſtians. There is no evil that conſcience convinceth them of, or any friend can mind them of in their former lives, but they will confeſs, lament, and covenant againſt; no duty then diſcovered, but they will aſſent unto, and engage to take up, if God will try them; the terrors of the Almighty are ſo dreadful, that they will do any thing rather then go to hell. Thus *Francis Spira*, who deliberately and in cold blood denyed the truth, when he lay in his bitter agonies, ſaid, if he might be but freed from them, he would deſpiſe all the tyrants in the world, he would never be afraid to profeſs the truth with the greateſt hazard. When the fooliſh Virgins were alaru-

alarumed with the noiſe of that dreadful cry at midnight, *Behold the Bridegroom comes*, they then begin to look to their Lamps, and they begin to cry for oyl, (a thing which they never ſought for before:) when they were awakened with the terror of the Lords approach, then they run to and fro from one to another, crying, give me a little of your oyl; *nothing leſs* enquired for *before*, *nothing* askt for *elſe now*. Though it be a truth, that the Judge ſtands before the door, *James* 5. 9. yet men are nothing moved at this, they will *lie ſtill* as long as he *ſtands ſtill*; but when he begins to knock at the door by ſome ſpecial providence, and threatens to come in ſpeedily, then you ſhall ſee how a man will beſtir himſelf, he will do any thing, ſuffer any thing rather then *God* ſhould break in upon him in this condition; then for a meſſenger, for a Miniſter, or ſome underſtanding Chriſtian to inſtruct him, or intercede for him; there can be nothing then propoſed to him, while the dread of the Almighty is upon him, that he will not ſubmit unto, and accept of; and all this while, the heart may not be changed. All this may ariſe from hence, he begins to ſee what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living *God*; thus the Lord who ſtands always at the door, knocks at mens conſciences, at

one

one time or other; at ſome mens often, and ſome ſtronger as well as oftener; and it is no wonder if ſuch ſtroaks do beat in ſome light into the ſoul, and make ſome change in a mans reſolutions for preſent, and practice afterward.

Fourthly, From the ſearching and convincing power of the Word under which men live. The Word is ſharper then a two edged ſword, a diſcerner of the heart and ſecret thoughts; it enters into the very ſouls of the wicked, and diſcovers what is within, but doth not change them; it works a *reformation*, though not a *regeneration*, *Heb.* 4. 12. *The word of God is quick and powerful, ſharper then any two-edged ſword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of the ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts, and intents of the heart.* Thus the wicked themſelves have found it. How did *Paul* get into *Felix* his conſcience, and ranſaked it? what an Earth-quake was there for the preſent? The *Judge* on the *Bench trembles*, while the *priſoner* at the *Bar preaches.* This is the caſe of many a ſcoffer at godlineſs, and of ſuch as deride and deſpiſe the Preachers and profeſſors of it; they come to hear for novelty, as *Felix* would hear *Paul*; but the Miniſter (notwithſtanding the contemptible thoughts they

they have of him, and the reſolutions they have to ſleight all that he ſays) gets within them, rips up their hearts, ſhews them the ſecrets of their thoughts, and they are ſo far awed with this, that they go away convinced of the evil of their thoughts and wayes, and perhaps reſolved to be other men; yet time and temptation eat out theſe things, becauſe there is no depth of earth for theſe to take rooting in.

Fiftly. *Men go thus far to quiet their conſciences*, though an unregenerate man will do nothing for God, yet he will do much for his peace; when once the word hath awakened conſcience, and rowſed that, when it hath taken him by the throat, and brought him to the judgement, then he preſently cries for compoſition, then he deſires a parley, and then he makes termes for his peace; Any thing to ſtop the month of an accuſing conſcience, eſpecially if it begin to condemn, as well as to accuſe. Hence it is, that many wicked men do many things in which they neither pleaſe *God*, nor *themſelves*. They *pleaſe not God*, becauſe they do them not upon good principles; They *pleaſe not themſelves* becauſe they are contrary to their luſts, which yet are as ſtrong in them as ever; but they do them to calm conſcience; they think it better to liſten to conſcience, rather then to their corruptions, be-

becauſe the pleaſure of ſin doth not countervail the ſorrow and trouble that it brings with it; and ſurely this is the ſtrength of ſuch mens reformation, their preſent peace is broken, conſcience is enlightned, they muſt either deny their luſts, or live in a preſent hell; if it were not for this preſent foretaſte of evil, they would not be moved, they would deſpiſe all the evil which is threatned to come.

6. *God hath ſome ſpecial ends in theſe things*: As

Firſt, *God hath a deſign to honour the word, and he makes the wicked themſelves witneſſes of the truth, and power of it, as well as the godly.* They carry up and down in their lives the pledges of the ſame. For their *reſtraints* do prove the power of it as well as the others *converſions.* Though they will not love *God* and his ways, yet *God* will make them fear, and though we do not preach to their hearts, yet we ſhall preach to their conſciences: and they ſhall be brought in at the laſt to prove what we preached was true, they themſelves having experienced it. Nay let me add this, that *the bridling and curbing of wicked men by the Word, is a greater evidence* (in ſome ſenſe) *of the power of it then the governing of the godly.* Thoſe *few things* which the wicked do *for fear* of the

the Word, shews the power of God more then those *many things* which the Saints do *for love* of it; the reason in this, because the godly have new and tender hearts, which are easily wrought upon, and are ready to comply with every command of God; but the other have hard and stony hearts, unapt to yeild. "The strength or "sharpness of a sword is more seen by ma-"king a small impression upon steel or stone, "then a large one upon wax: and surely Gods "word is glorified not onely by converting, "but by restraining; by chaining up the Ly-"on, as well as leading the Lamb; the scars "which unregenerate men carry of the "Ministry, prove it mighty through God.

2. *Gods end is to give men here a foretaste of the judgement to come*; God keeps "a petty sessions here, before the great Assize. "*Felix* had a taste of this Judgement; the Lord made him to feel something of what he heard, and while *Paul* was reasoning of judgement *to come*, *God* made it seem *present*; and the Judge is by the authority of the Word put into the place of the prisoner; he trembles as if he were really at the Bar, which *Paul* had but now discovered, *Acts* 24. 25. Thus the Lord deals often with wicked men, who sleight all bonds, and cast the cords of *God* far from them; he binds them fast in irons, and reserves them

them in chains for judgement to come; and though they seem to have the only liberty of all men, and to enjoy all pleasure, yet they carry some reliſhes of this day upon their ſpirits, which are as the chains which the priſoner draggs after him. Nay he does not only keep them in irons thus, but he gives them ſome taſts of hell it ſelf, ſuch as *Cain* and *Judas* had, *and then he takes them out of one hell, and throws them into another*; as the Saints are in Heaven, oft times before they die, in the aſſurance of their intereſt in it: ſo wicked men are oft in hell before hand, by their fore-taſt of it.

3. *To leave men inexcuſable.* Nothing will ſtrip them ſo naked at the laſt day as theſe perſwaſions which they had, according to the meaſure and clearneſs of theſe, ſuch will be their ſhame, and ſuch will be their confuſion, to ſee how near they came to the kingdom of *God*, and yet ſhut out. *God* convinces thoſe of ſin whom he intends to ſave, that they may condemn themſelves, and juſtifie *God* here; and he convinces many whom he intends not to ſave, that they may be forced to juſtifie him hereafter, when he ſhall condemn them, *Pſalm* 51. 3,4. *Againſt thee have I ſinned, that thou mayeſt be juſtified when thou ſpeakeſt, and pure when thou judgeſt.* *David* did not ſin that God might be juſtified, but *David* was convinced

ced of his sin, that *God* might be cleared, and *David* condemned in himself. Saints convictions make them humble themselves, and the convictions & restraints which are thereby made upon wicked men, will make very much for the justifying of *God* at the last, and for the taking of all excuse from them; for they can never answer this plea: *If there were not evil in sin, why did you fear or refrain from any? and if there was evil in it, why did you not refrain all sin?* and this will stop their mouths, that they had knowledg of this day, & of the judgement of it; for *God* will take out a copy of the Judgement of the day out of their own consciences.

Chap. VI.

Shewing the reasons why men so far perswaded go no further.

Qu. How comes it to pass that men thus far perswaded go no farther?

As it is a wonder that men go so far as some do without grace; so is it as strange a thing, that being brought so far, they should stop here; but this is

First, *from Satan*; he labours to blinde their eyes, that they should not see the things that belong to their peace; but if he cannot keep them in a gross darkness,

and in a total neglect of Heaven, then he hath a hundred ways to couzen them, and to bring them to compoſition, and to perſwade them to half it with God; if he cannot keep them where they are, yet he will make them ſit down in the mid-way to Heaven; he knows that he that underbids ſhall buy the truth no more then he that never cheapens it. He knows Chriſt hath ſet the price upon it, and *he that will not give all that he hath for the kingdome of Heaven, ſhall as ſurely loſe it, as he that will give nothing.* He that will keep one ſin, or deny one command of Chriſt to ſubmit to it, ſhall thereby be excluded as well as he that yeelds in nothing to Chriſt. The devil does labour therefore to hinder awakened ſoules, from comming up fully to Chriſt. When he connot hinder them from doing ſomething, he will perſwade them to keep the right hand, orto ſpare the right eye. If they will take their lamps, yet he will not ſuffer them to take oyl for their veſſels; and this way Satan couzens not a few, who cannot be tempted to ſit ſtill, yet are eaſily kept from preſſing forward to the mark.

Second Rea. From their conſciences. Conſcience having attained its end which was peace, the man ſits down. It was nothing, but trouble of conſcience at firſt that makes ſuch men ſtir, and now, by doing ſomething, having

having obtained a little peace, they say, soul, thou hast enough; they never act in religion beyond necessitie; nor go further then the terrours and feares of conscience will drive them; and these are oft times removed without grace, and they sit down without Christ. I shewed you in the former how the devil did hide from them the extent of their duties, and the latitude of Christs commands, that so they might not attempt to go farther then he might consent unto, with security to his own interest in them, having cozened them into a good opinion of themselves & mis-represented the work of grace, and the change which is wrought in them; they think all is well, and conscience is in a great calme, and this being once asleep again they settle upon their lees; the dregs which are yet left are not purged out. For all the motions of man which proceed from no other principle then the feares of death and hell, carry a man no farther then to seek his own peace; the conscience is wounded, and if the man can lick that whole again, hee is quiet; but if the will were wrought upon, he would not set down till he were perfectly changed.

Third Reas. May be from their own corruption. Being awakned by the word they begin to stir under the sense of the danger, and being convinced of the truth they re-

ceive it with joy, and like *Herod* do many things, till it comes to ſome peculiar corruption, and there they are ſtopped; there is ſome darling luſt or other that they cannot leap over; they march like *Jehu* furiouſly with a ſeeming zeal for God, till they come to the golden Calves of *Dan* and *Bethel*, and they cannot pull theſe down; ſome luſt, ſome intereſt, ſome advantage hinders them from following of Chriſt fully, and had they but grace in their wils ſutable to the light in their underſtandings, they would be Chriſtians indeed, as in the caſe of *Jehu*, 2 *King.* 10. 25, 29, 30. The young man in the goſpel goes on very chearfully, and bids fair for Heaven, as one that was reſolved to have it upon any termes, *Mat.* 19. 20. *What lack I yet?* He ſeems to be willing to give more for Heaven, then all had yet given, and to do more, then yet he had done, as if all that God had required in the law had been too little, and too low a price for glory; but when Chriſt makes a propoſal to him which met with his darling ſin, which was the love of the world, he goes away ſorrowful. This man that was ſo near the kingdome of Heaven in all appearance, leaves it behind him for the love of one corruption; this is the caſe of every half Chriſtian; one luſt or other hinders them, (though they

ſeem

seem to run wel) and parts Christ and them for ever.

Fourth Reas. From the meanes they live under; they may live under a fawning and flattering Ministry, who will perswade them that the smoak is a fire, and the spark is a flame, that cry peace, peace, where there is none, healing their wounds sleightly, and daubing them with untempered mortar, *Ezek.* 13. 10. How many are there that go to Hell in peace, whom their Ministers canonize here for Saints? how many are careless of themselves, by reason of their Ministers confidence, who will salute people by the name of beleevers, as if he knew their place in Heaven? This makes them think they live high, when indeed 'tis he that preaches low, and that all is well, because he never shewed them how ill it is. Men preach the work of conversion by halves, they search not their people to the quick, they come not neer the consciences of their hearers, neither do they labour to do it; if they can cloath their matter in silken and soft language that may please the ears of their people, and gain applause amongst them, they think all is well; and it is no wonder if they think as they do, and thus both go down slumbering into hell.

Fift Reas. May be in respect of God, and that in a four-fold account.

1. In respect of his Justice, he punishes their disobedience to their former light, by with-holding of light from them, *Rom.* 11. 28. and because when they had but little they were not faithful with that, therefore God will trust them but with little; it is just with God to punish the abuse of natural light and gifts, by a with-holding of supernatural.

2. God doth it to shew his soveraignty; grace is absolutely his own; he ows it no man, but gives it to whom he pleaseth; he denies it to the inlightned and convinced, and to him that is almost a Christian, he refuseth to the Scribes and Pharisees, and gives it to Publicans and harlots, *Mat.* 21. 31. that men might know that he will do what pleaseth him with his own.

3. That he might shew what the will of man is, and how vain a thing when left to it self. God will have us to see that it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God which sheweth mercy, *Rom.* 9. 16. If it lay in the will of man, doubtless men so far perswaded would turn to God.

4. God orders it so that he might be admired 2 *Thes.* 1. 10. in them that believe, that they that are saved may see its wholly from God, when the people of God shall see those that followed them so close in profession,

fession, that they tread upon their heels, and perhaps in parts and common gifts exceeded them, when they shall see these standing on the left hand, and themselves on the right, they will then easily see what it was that made them to differ, they will then cry out, grace, grace, and admire the wisdom of God.

CHAP. VII.

The first Use of the Doctrine.

USE 1. This speaks terror to those that are not at all perswaded to be Christians. If those that are almost Christians are like to fall short, what will become of those who are so far from being Christians, that they have onely the name, and nothing else? that have not the shew and appearance of being such? what will become of the prophane, the Drunkard, the Swearer, the Scoffer, the Sabbath-breaker, and the unclean, of him that is so far from carrying oyl in his vessel, that he hath none in his lamp? if those that in the judgement of many passe for righteous, shall miscarry, what will become of those whom all men brand with the name of wicked & ungodly? If some shall be sent to hell from the society of the Saints, who went so far, that they

were not discerned by the strictest professors, as the foolish Virgins: what wil become of them, that are the companions of the wicked, that eat and drink with the drunken. If God deal thus with the green tree that hath leaves, yea and some fruit, because his fruit is sowre, or not ripe; what will the Lord do with the tree that is dryed up, and hath neither fruit nor yet leaves? surely God will bind these up in bundles, and cast them into everlasting burnings. O consider with your selves, you have heard how far a man may go, and yet be but almost a Christian; are not many of you convinc'd that you fall short of these, and that you come not neer those who yet fall short of the mark of the high calling? if these shall perish who go beyond you; how can you possibly escape that come not up to them? surely this must needs convince many of you, that your condition is ful of palpable and manifest danger; Ile not spend time to reason out the misery of your condition, nor to convince you concerning these things, for you carry up and down with you the worm which gnaws you already. The Drunkard and the Swearer I am perswaded, is condemned of himself; but I shall hasten to address my self to another sort of people who are ready to be more quiet then you, and to please themselves

selves in hopes that it is not so bad with them as with others, when perhaps it is worse with them then all the rest.

I shall now turne my self towards those who would be accounted Christians, and do in a measure and degree more or less comply with the ways of *God*.

CHAP. VIII.

The Second Use which is of Examination.

USE 2. Give me leave (my friends) to make application of all that hath been said unto you, for I have spoken this principally for your sakes. Does not this place begin to put on the face of Religion? you do not only professe your selves to be Christians, but many of you do believe that there is more in being a Christian then a bare profession, and that to be a Christian is more then to be called a Christian; you would pretend to be Christians in the strictest sense. Oh my friends, is it an honour to be called, and accounted a Christian, and is it not much more an honour to be a Christian? *if there be any good in being a Christian, then labour to be such indeed, and if there be no good in being so, then do not pretend to be so*; either labour to be what you would seem to be, or do not

pretend to be what you desire not to be; be Christians in truth, or be no Christians in appearance. I know you cannot hear the things which have been spoken to you, without some convictions; you must confess that your conditions have been ript up, and by what hath been said, if your hearts be not in a deep sleep, you must needs be sensible that many of you are very far from being Christians, and the most of you are but almost Christians. Are these things of a slender consideration? *can you think that this is your condition, or suspect it, and yet be quiet?* nay, can you chuse but tremble to think what a dreadful thing it is to be but almost a Christian? some of you perhaps are convinc'd you are not almost Christians yet, some that you are but almost, and some are so guilty, that you dare not put it upon the tryal, least it should be manifest that you are such as the doctrine hath discovered. Some of you perhaps are like *Gallio*, you care for none of these things; you are resolved to be quiet what ever the Minister says, not minding that there is a greater that condemns you then the Minister; if we could throw hel-fire about your ears, and scorch you with the heat of the Word, yet you would be quiet again so soon as you can get out of the sight of the pulpit, and the

sound

ſound of the Miniſter; if we could call for fire from Heaven, as *Elijah* did, 2 *King.* 1. 19. Tell me, do not many of you ſit here in little eaſe? are you not ſometimes under much trouble, and many convictions while you are under the word? but when you are out of the noiſe of that, you grow quiet again. Ah my friends, will you never be ſerious, and in good earneſt? will you always be betwixt jeſt and earneſt? will you alwayes dally with convictions, and triffle with eternity? ſhall all that I have ſpoken to you from this Text be to no purpoſe? ſhall I conclude, that the Lord raiſed me up in judgement to be a witneſſe againſt you? Pray give me leave to reaſon with you a little, and oh that the things which have been delivered to you, were written upon your hearts, that I could but make you ſenſible of the danger of that condition in which many of you are. Oh that I could ſo affect my own heart, and yours in this thing, that thoſe words which *Francis Spira* breathed out in his agony, might be ever ſounding in our ears; *It is a fearful thing to be almoſt a Chriſtian.* I beſeech you brethren enquire concerning your conditions, and compare your ſelves with the word which hath been preach'd. Gather up thoſe convictions which you have met withall in this diſ-

courſe, and ſee what anſwer you can make to the Inditements which your conſciences have drawn up againſt you from it.

If conſcience have not acted its part hitherto, let it do it now. Begin and judge your ſelves, that you be not judged of the Lord. Better it is to judge your ſelves, and lie in the duſt, then to be judged of God, and caſt into hel fire. I would intreat all you that have at any time attempted any reformation, and pretended to a change: to conſider ſeriouſly of this thing. Are there not ſome here, who have been under great convictions of the evil of your conditions, and when theſe were ſtrong upon you, you made great promiſes of reforming, and of being new men. Nay, you could not conceal this, but others have taken notice of it, good people took notice of it, and they had great hopes; and wicked men took notice of it, and perhaps for preſent were ſtartled at it; but have they not ſince ſaid loe, ſee what is become of ſuch a mans reformation, the man is become like one of us again. I am confident here are thoſe amongſt us who will be ſtung to purpoſe, when they come upon their death-beds, when they do but look back, and conſider what convictions they had, what promiſes they have made, what profeſſion they have taken up for a time, and how neer they came

came to be Christians, and how they have fallen away from their profession, and are fallen to their wicked practises again in private, yea & sometimes to plead for these evils of which they have been convinc'd.

Others of you that have not fallen back so visibly, yet how have you stood still, and shamed the hopes of *Gods* people, who have expected greater things from you, then they see, or find! It may be said of some of you, as it was of the Galathians, *ye did run well, who did hinder you?* you seemed to begin in the spirit, but will you end in the flesh? you did run at first setting forth, and you were very sensible, and seemed very serious, but now you slack your pace. Is there lesse evil in sin now, then when your eyes were first opened? you could then roar and cry, oh the evil of sin, oh my Drunkennesse, my company-keeping, my Carding and Dicing; these were bitter things; but are these things less evil now then they were? I am sure some of you have other thoughts of these then you had; is there less need of Christ now then in former days? or are you less sensible of it? is there less need of zeal for Gods glory now then before, and of circumspection in your walking? is the society of the people of God lesse profitable, or lesse desirable then it was,

that

that ſome of you who ſeemed to deſire opportunities of getting acquaintance with them, are at a ſtand? Look into theſe things, and tell me whether theſe things do not ſpeak ſadly of many of you, that you were once almoſt Chriſtians, and are now gone back, and others are but almoſt Chriſtians, and therefore ſtand at a ſtay, if you do not decline? Oh that I could perſwade you to pluck off thoſe Figg-leaves with which you cover your ſelves, and ſee the nakedneſſe of your ſouls, acknowledge it, and come to Chriſt for white rayment, that your nakedneſſe do not appeare; that profeſſion which you cover your ſelves withall now, will be your ſhame at the laſt day.

But here will ariſe a great queſtion; How ſhall I know whether I am a Chriſtian in good earneſt or not, whether I am altogether a Chriſtian? Now, you will ſay this muſt needs be hard to reſolve, becauſe we ſin all, and every one hath ſome defects or other, and will have till we are perfected. How ſhall we be able to diſtingiſh betwixt the defects of a true Chriſtian, and one that is but almoſt a Chriſtian?

Anſ. A ſound Chriſtian commonly fails in the manner of performing duties, but he that is but a Chriſtian in part fails in the matter; the firſt fails in the circumſtan-

tials;

tials; the second in the *Substantial* of duty. A sound Christian performes every duty made known to him, the other picks and chooses his duties, such as are *easiest* or most *profitable*, or most in *fashion*, or such as are best *accommodated* to his own *parts* or *abilities*. He takes up some, and leaves out others; but a sound Christian takes up every duty, embraces all the commands of God, with equall respect, not having any respect to those things which guide the other in his profession and practice; *The* one will perform publique duties, because he can make his advantage of them; there is an honour or a profit attending them, but he neglects private duties, because he can make no advantage of that which no man sees. Or if hee do perform private duties of prayer, and reading, yet he omits the examination of his heart, and the watching over his thoughts, and the mortifying of his secret corruptions, because these things are hard, and the other are more easie. Besides amongst his publick duties he performes some because they do make most for the discovering of his abilities, as a man that hath a gift in prayer, or in opening the word, may do much in them not for the love of the duties, but out of a desire to exercise his own parts: But he that is indeed a Christian will do all that

is commanded; though it be a duty which is not fitted to his advantages, nor to which he is not fitted by natural accomplishments, yet he will do it willingly and cheerfully, though he can do it but weakly, this was Davids frame, *Psal.* 119.6. *Then shall I not be ashamed when I have respect unto all thy commandements.*

Now I beseech you consider this: Are there not here those who do pick and choose their duties, and that live in the constant (nay total) neglect of such duties, as they are convinct of? With what face can you lay claim to an interest in Christ, & call your selves Christians? How many are there here that will take up some duties that are in fashion, and yet will neglect others that have a little selfe denyal annext unto them? Can you be disciples of Christ without following Christ, nay can you be disciples without following him with your crosses upon your backs? *Mat.* 16.24. Do not flatter and deceive your selves, it is not every one that cryes Lord, Lord; it is not every one that calls himselfe a Christian that will be found a Christian at the last day; that which will pass you for a Christian amongst men; will not do it before the Lord, who judges not with mans judgment. The Lord is impartiall in judging; and if you be not so in your profession, & in your obe-

obedience, be sure of it, the Lord will put a difference betwixt you and those that fear his Name.

Secondly. Though all do fail partly in the matter, and partly in manner of performing duties, yet a sincere Christian labours to finde out his defects, and to be humbled for them; but the halfe Christian either sees or considers them not, and therefore is quiet under them. A gracious soul is much in prying into its own miscarriages, both in its omissions, what duty has bin neglected & into its weaknesses; what neglect hath bin in the duties, what grace was wanting, or what was weak in it, and so one dut y rises out of the ashes of another. But the other takes no notice of those things, but contents himself when he has done the duty, and is glad that his task is over, even as one rejoyces that he is come to his journeys end; the one sees a reason to pray again, when he hath been at prayer, to begg pardon for the sins of his prayers; but the other sees no such thing; the language of a carnall heart after any dutie (however it be done) is nothing but this. *Now soul take thy ease.* Oh now tell me, be there not many that live in the neglect of duties, publick, and private, family and closet duties, and yet you are quiet under them? this is sad evidence that you are of these halfe Christi-

ans.

ans. If you were truly humbled, it were impossible that you should please your selves in such a posture; it is impossible for a man or woman to continue resolvedly in that for which he is truely humbled: that which thou groaneſt under, thou wilt labour to lay down, and if thou art not humbled under thy defects, thou art no Christian; Remember and consider it all you that hear me this day, it is a thing inconsistent with the truth of Christianitie for a man to live in a willing, quiet, constant neglect of any known duty. The best Christian may be put by the performance of his known duty, by the strength of some temptation for a time; but to persist in this, to make this his constant practice, and quiet himself in it, is a notorious proof of a half Christian. But this let me say to you, who are complaining of your failings in duty, and are deeply sensible of your wandrings, and weaknesses, and your souls are afflicted for them, and you are filled from hence with humble thoughts of your selves; God will put a difference betwixt your defects, and other mens. Be of good comfort, you shall not be reckoned amongst these halters, and halfers in the worship of God; you that make this daily use of the imperfections of your duties to lie low, and humble before the Lord, shall never be

charged

charged with them in the world to come. And you that can neither think well, nor ſpeak well of your ſelves in what you do, you ſhall have this honor, & this comfort, to hear well of God, and ſhall have this teſtimony, that you have pleaſed him, when you ſhall have the great ſeal of Gods approbation ſet upon your weak, but ſincere obedience, *Well done you good and faithful ſervant.*

Third. He that is but *almoſt a Chriſtian* is unwilling to find out his duty, (though he dare not live out of the practice of it, being convinc'd) but he that is *altogether a Chriſtian*, does not onely live in the *practice* of what he *knows*, but is greedy to *know* what he ought to *practiſe*. It is not ſo much the living up to what we know, as the deſire to know how we ſhould live, that does evidence a man to be a ſound and impartial Chriſtian. *It is poſſible to find a man that neglects no known duty, and yet is but half a Chriſtian*, for conſcience may be ſo awakened, that a man may not dare to neglect any thing which he is convinc'd he ought to do, being known he muſt practice it, for his peace ſake; but this man is not willing to know his duty, he will not take it up till it be clearly brought home to him, he will not ſeek for it, and hunt after it, he will ſtop his ears and eyes as long as

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he can, but when he can withstand the hints, and intimations, and convictions no longer, then he cannot but take it up: but he that is a true Christian does not onely practise what he knows, but he desirs to know that he may practise; he seeks out for his duty, which a hypocrite will not do; the hypocrite seeks for his peace in the performance of duty, but the godly man seeks out for his duty; if he have the least hint in the Word of any duty which he hath been ignorant of, he cannot be quiet till he be satisfied about it, till he hath found it out. The other does not more greedily suck in comfort and notions tending that way, then he does information of duty and directions about it.

Now let me tell you the difference between those two sorts of persons is not more eminently discerned in any thing then in this I am speaking unto. For the highest pitch that such a man can come to who is not fully a Christian, is this, that he may live in the practise of every known duty, yet here he is distinguished from a sound, hearty, substantial Christian; *there is in him an unwillingness to be informed, and convinced of his duty.* There does remain in every unregenerate man, (and is the surest mark of unregeneracy,) an unwillingness to come to the

the light, leaſt their deeds ſhould be diſcovered. Natural conſcience, and legal working will make a man follow the light when once it hath found him out, but nothing but grace will make a man love the light, and ſeek after the light to walk by it, *John* 3.20,21. Give me leave to commend this particular to your conſideration, and take heed you be not deceived here. Here are ſome of you come to the Word, and perhaps God meets with you, and convinces you of a ſin, and you go away, and reſolve againſt it; nay perhaps you make conſcience of that ever after; again you are convinc'd of ſuch a duty, and go home, and take up ſome reſolutions to practice it, nay you cannot be quiet in the neglect of it, and you will ſay, ſurely I am now a Chriſtian indeed, for I live in the Commiſſion of no known ſin, nor in the omiſſion of any known duty; do I lack any thing yet? this is enough for to make thee paſs for a true Chriſtian with others, but this doth not make thee ſo before the Lord, neither mayeſt thou conclude thy ſelf ſuch a one from all this; thou mayeſt be almoſt a Chriſtian all this while; for the main thing may yet be wanting, which is, grace in the heart; thou *mayeſt not neglect duty, and yet thou mayeſt not love thy duty*; thou mayeſt not dare

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to disobey the command, and yet thou mayest not delight in the commands of God; if thou hast nothing but convictions and awakenings of conscience, thou wilt never hunt after thy duty, seek abroad for it as *Esau* hunted for the venison; thou perhaps, when it is brought home to thee, and prest upon thee, wilt receive it as *Jacob* did the Kids flesh upon his Mothers importunity. Oh tell me, are you not troubled when you meet with a conviction under the Word, and you struggle against it, and would fain evade it; you would not willingly see your sin, nor willingly see your duty. Nay, when you do meet with a conviction of either kind, your hearts do rise against it, and you say in your selves, Oh that this were no sin, that I might enjoy it quietly, or oh that there were no such command to make this my duty; so that though you yeeld to the conviction, and walk by it, yet you are surprized by it; the duty finds out you, you do not find out that, nor go forth to meet it half way; this is a cleer sign you are not come fully up to close with Christ; there is as great a difference betwixt you and one that is come fully to the termes of Christ, as there is betwixt green wood and dry; the greenest wood may be made to burn if it be put into the fire & much blown upon, but the dry wood takes

takes fire presently without the help of the bellows. A godly heart is like Tinder, the least spark of conviction that falls upon it kindles it, he complies as readily with the word of conviction, as with the word of comfort; nay ordinarily catches hold of the former, and improves it more then the latter. *Balam* was so convinc'd of sin, that he dares not go beyond the command of God; but his behaviour may prove, that the discoveries which God made to him, did not please him. But *David* does not onely follow a conviction, but loves it, and loves the means by which he was convinc'd, *Psalm* 119. 10, 11. *With my whole heart have I sought thee, O let me not wander from thy Commandements; thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee*, *Psalm* 19. 11. *David* counted the word sweet unto him, because it gave him warning concerning sin that he might avoid it, and because it enlightned his eyes, and shewed him his duty that he might practice it, *v.* 8. Surely an hyprocrite cannot love the word of God upon this account, these are not the breathings of unsound hearts; they say not as he did, *Psalm* 119 5. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!* They pray not as he did, *Psalm* 119. 27. 33, 34, 36. *Make me to understand the way of thy*

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precepts: *Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy ſtatutes: Give me underſtanding, and I ſhall keep thy law: Incline mine heart unto thy teſtimonies.* They have not his affections, *Pſalm* 119. 14, 16, 20, 72. *I have rejoyced in the way of thy teſtimonies, as much as in all riches, I will delight my ſelf in thy ſtatutes: I will not forget thy word, My ſoul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgements at all times. The law of thy mouth is better unto me then thouſands of gold and ſilver.* Theſe are the great and infallible charecters of a heart fully complying with God, of one that is a Chriſtian, and Diſciple of Chriſt indeed; the man or woman that does thus is doubtleſs ſuch a one as *David* prayed he might be, *Pſalm* 119. 80. his heart is ſound with God; but if it be otherwiſe with you, I tell you you are not yet the Diſciples of Chriſt, you do not follow him in that great thing, in which he is propoſed as our example (*viz.*) he did not onely do his Fathers will, but he counted it meat and drink to do ſo.

Four. He that is a Chriſtian indeed, labors to be much more a Chriſtian then yet he is; he that is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, contents himſelf with what he is, and thinks all is well; and indeed this is a ſure diſcovery of both theſe. They who are *altogether Chriſtians*, I mean in reſpect of their

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perſwaſions and *endeavours*, account themſelves but *half Chriſtians* in reſpect of *practice* and attainment: But he that is but half a Chriſtian both in practice and in perſwaſion, accounts himſelf enough in both. I have heard this complaint fall from the mouth often of one of the eminenteſt Chriſtians that ever I knew, *I am but half a Chriſtian.* But I never hear you formal luke-warm profeſſors ſo judg of themſelves. Theſe are much in obſerving the difference betwixt them and others, rather then the diſproportion that is betwixt them, and that great example by which they are to walk, or that holy Law unto which they are to be conformed; whereas a true Chriſtian is much in comparing himſelf with the Law of God, humbling himſelf for falling ſhort of that, and not applauding himſelf for that in which he ſeems to exceed others; now that you may the better judge of your ſelves by this tryal laid down, I ſhall help you a little by branching this Head into theſe four particulars; for there is none that will ſeem guilty of this at firſt ſight, but will ſay, I would be more a Chriſtian then I am, and I wiſh I were better, and pray God make us all better, and yet ſuch perſons have a ſecret opinion of their condition that it is good enough, and they

ſtrive not to be better: you ſhall know whether you do reckon your ſelves altogether Chriſtians or not, by theſe four things.

1. If the performance of ſome duties take thee off from the enquiry after others; thus it is with a half Chriſtian, he makes one duty a vail to cover another, he makes one duty a blinde to another, and becauſe he does ſome things which others neglect, he thinks he does all that is required. Thus it was with the Phariſee, *Luke* 18. 12. *I thank God I am not as other men.* And thus it was with *Paul* before converſion, *Phil.* 3. 6. *Touching the righteouſneſſe which is in the law blameleſſe.* But a true Chriſtian is careful that while he performs ſome duties, he does not neglect others, and he carries a jealouſie over himſelf ſtill, that he hath not found out the duties of every condition, and of every relation, he fears ſtill that ſomething of his duty is hid from his eyes.

2. A man that thinks himſelf to be enough a Chriſtian, does not onely think that he doth enough, but he thinks he does every thing well enough, he thinks that he is ſpiritual enough in duty; but the other labours to be more ſpiritual in what he does. So that he does not only deſire to abound in the matter of duty, but ſo excel in the manner of performing it.

3. He that thinks himſelf enough a Chri-

Christian, looks not unto Jesus Christ his pattern and example, but he looks to himself, and to others that are beneath him, and this confirms him in opinion of himself: and hence it is, that he is not humbled under his failings, but lifted up under his performances. But a true Christian that thinks himself but a piece of a Christian, and would be much more such, is much in eying Christ, and is much in humbling himself for falling short of him in every thing that he does. If he looks to men, it is to them that excel him in grace; but he looks more to Christ, then to all men living, as the Apostle did, *Phil.* 3. 12, 13, 14. *Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ. Brethren, I count not my self to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the price of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

4. He that thinks himself enough a Christian, will shew himself in this, he is not willing to receive any conviction from any one concerning his condition; he cannot beare with any one that will deal plainly with him, and call his condition into question; he is shy of such as are faith-

full with him, and offended at any word that ſeems to be preſt upon him; he thinks he does not deſerve it. But a ſound Chriſtian takes it kindly, when any deale faithfully with him, and he receives every reproof or conviction with much tenderneſs; nay, he is not offended if any do ſuſpect or feare his condition *conſcientiouſly*, though perhaps *cauſleſly*, and the reaſon why he can bear with the teares and jealouſies of others is becauſe he hath jealouſies of himſelf. By theſe things you ſhall try your own ſpirits whether you do account your ſelves enough Chriſtians. If upon inquiry you finde that you have this eſteem of your ſelves, then know that you are no Chriſtians indeed, and in truth. For he that is a Chriſtian fully in perſwaſion, deſires ſtill to be more a Chriſtian in practiſe; he is not and cannot be contented with what he is, nor with what he does, but labours as much to exceed himſelf, as the other doth labour to exceed others; he labours to have his laſt works more then his former, whereas the other contents himſelfe in running his round, and in doing to day, as yeſterday, and to morrow as this day.

Fiftly, He that is but almoſt a Chriſtian differs from a ſound in this: he will follow *God* no farther then to get quiet of conſcience, the other follows *God* for holineſs.

Now

Now a deſire to pacifie a troubled conſcience may carry a man far; but a deſire to be holy will carry a man much farther; and the reaſon is evident. Becauſe the one is a conſtrained motion, the other is free and voluntary. A man that is acted meerly by a deſire of peace, will not go ſo far as he that is moved by an inward principle, becauſe he is not converſant in duty for the love of duty, but for the love of his peace, which if he miſs, he will after a time caſt aſide the duty as vain and unprofitable; or if he meet with it, he will begin to be more remiſs in it, counting it needleſs to be ſo ſtrict, when he hath attained his ends. Again, ſuch a man will limit himſelf in duty, that ſeeks nothing but his peace in it; he will go no farther then he ſees he muſt go, or hazard his peace; and when he hath quieted his conſcience, by arriving at ſuch a meaſure of reformation, and by attaining to ſuch a degree of profeſſion, he then reſolves to ſit down, and ſays, All is wel'. Every motion ceaſes in the attaining the end of it; ſo does this mans endeavour, when he hath gotten a little reſt to his ſpirit; but a man that follows God for holineſſe can never be ſatisfied with it; he cannot ſit down and ſay it is enough; for he can never have the fill of his deſire in this life; there is an infiniteneſs in the

desire of every renewed heart after God, and holiness, which cannot be filled up till it come in Heaven. We have a very plain scripture for this, 1 *John* 3. 23. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appeare, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, & every one that hath this hope, purifies himself a: *God* is pure; here is a sure rule to judge of the truth of our desires by. He that desires holiness unfaignedly and sincerely, desires it infinitely; but he that desires it for something else, desires it but in a such a degree as will serve to reach such an end as he proposes to himself. If a man seeks it for his credit in the world, then he seeks no more of it then is in credit with men. If he seek it for his peace, then he seeks it onely so far as may serve to allay the heate of his conscience, and to remove such convictions that are upon him; and when this is done, he strives no farther. What a man uses as a meanes to another thing, which is the end, he ceases to use when he hath attained that for which he used it; but what a man desires simply for it self, that he desires still, so long as it is absent in any degree; this is one reason why covetous men are never satisfied with riches, because they desire them for them-

themselves. A covetous man makes riches his end, and he can never be satisfied unlesse he had all. A godly man makes Gods glory his end, and uses riches but as a meanes to this; so that if he have but enough to help him in this design, to attain his end of honouring God, he is satisfied. As good men seek riches and honours, so do wicked men seek grace and holiness in their notions; they seek these as meanes to some other thing, they would have some grace, as much as would serve their turn to hold up their credit in the world, or to keep the worm of conscience from knawing now, or as much as they think will bring them to Heaven; but a little will serve for the first, & they think a little will serve for the last, and therefore they would not have much; they would not be too strict, nor too precise to trouble the world, nor have people think that they are singular, yet they would be counted good Christians; let me tell you as many of you as limit your selves, and set such and such bounds to your profession and desires, and think a measure of grace and holiness is enough; you think you are good Christians as you need be, yea and as good as you desire to be, it is manifest you do not make grace and holiness your end, but you desire it for something else, it is but a

meanes to ſome other thing, which you having attained, reſt in; if you did ſeek grace and holineſs for it ſelf, you could not poſſibly reſt in any degree of it which is attainable here; you would never ſit down and ſay you had enough, till you were holy, even as God is holy. If you did ſeek God aright in an ordinance, you would not onely ſeek the knowledge of him, but conformity to him. A carnal heart may deſire the knowledge of God, but a regenerate ſeeks to have communion with him; the one would know the truth, but the other would experience it; one would not be ignorant of God, but the other he would not be without God, he makes it his buſineſs to enjoy God, and till he do ſo, nothing will ſatisfie him.

But now leaſt I ſhould wound any poor doubting ſoul with that which was intended onely to awaken you, and ſend ſuch a one away grieved from this ordinance, and ſtrengthen thoſe ſad concluſions which ſuch a one is too ready to draw againſt himſelf; I ſhall lay down a few things for the ſatisfaction of ſuch, which may ſtay their ſouls with ſome comfortable perſwaſion, that they are not the people intended in the convictions and reproofs which have been laid down in this Doctrine. Tell me then thou doubting

ſoul

ſoul who feareſt greatly concerning thy condition, and art jealous that thou art but almoſt a Chriſtian, anſwer me the queſtion which I ſhall propound unto thee, and I truſt thou wilt be able to unty this knot which is upon thy ſpirit.

Firſt, Art thou willing to know all the will of God? is there in thee an impartial deſire to be acquainted with every command, and to have all the light to ſhine in thy face? Doeſt thou not deſire to ſhrowd thy ſelf under any cloud of darkneſſe and ignorance of the minde of God, nor to ſhift off any convictions of the truth, and of thy duty contained in it? if thou doeſt love the light, yea all the light, convincing as well as comforting light, this ſpeaks comfortably to thee, as to a ſoul that is ſound in the ſtatutes of God.

Secondly, Doeſt thou find thy heart complying with every command of God, when it is made known to thee? canſt thou ſay with *David*, that *thou haſt reſpect to all his ways*? art thou glad when thou getteſt more knowledge of ſin, that thou mayeſt eſcape it, and more light concerning thy duty, that thou mayeſt embrace it? this is a ſigne that the Law is written in thy heart, and thy heart will not be removed from it.

Thirdly, Do thy endeavours witneſs the truth of thy deſires? art thou willing to

uſe every means which God has appointed to bring thee to that end, which thou ſayeſt thou propoſeſt to thy ſelf? Many are full of wiſhes and wouldings; they will ſay, We muſt be holy, and we muſt be thus and thus, and pray God we may be ſo, and pray God turn our hearts; but theſe are idle wiſhes, they are not accompanied with the uſe of every meanes which is appointed to this end. They would wiſh that God would make them ſuch and ſuch, but ſtill they continue in their ſhops, when they ſhould be in the publick Ordinances, or in private duties, and they link themſelves to ſuch company where they cannot expect ſuch things as they pretend to deſire. They neglect to joyn themſelves to the people of God, who might further ſuch deſignes; this is an argument their deſires are not deſignes, but pretences, but if thou doeſt uſe every means which God hath appointed as a furtherance of holineſs; this does teſtifie for thee that thy deſires after holineſs are true and unfeigned.

Fourthly, Doeſt thou deſire to exerciſe every grace as well as to perform every duty? doeſt thou endeavour to fill up thy duties with grace? this is the great diſcovery of a Chriſtian indeed, who does not content himſelf to perform duties in a ſlight and for-

formal manner, but does labour to exercise that grace which is required in the duty, and does account this the ornament of duty, when much grace is exercised in it. He is not satisfied with parts and gifts, and the enlargement of these in prayer, meditation, or conference; but he looks to the frame of the heart, and rejoyces when he finds that set right for God. Is this thy desire, and thy great design in every duty? oh this may be a good evidence for thee that thou art a Christian indeed.

Fiftly, Dost thou blesse God simply for the change that is wrought upon thy soul? he that is a Christian indeed rejoyces more in the change which is begun in his soul, then in any thing that is here below; he that hath been truly humbled for sin, and grieved for that, rejoyces principally in sanctification, and blesses God for that; he that was never truly humbled for sin, can rejoyce, and thank God he is not as other men? but it is rather a boasting, then a thanksgiving, he can rejoyce in the fruits of such a change as is wrought in him; he comforts himself in this, that there are many worse then he, and that people look upon him with another eye then they do other men; this he rejoyces in, because it is for his honour, but he rejoyces not simply in his grace and holiness; for then he would

mourn for others who want it, and not exalt himself; he may rejoyce also because he hath gotten a little quiet in his own spirit by the change which seems to be in him, and he says it is better now then in former times, yet he may not rejoyce simply because he is changed, for then he would desire to be more and more changed from grace to grace; but a true Christian rejoyces in the beginnings of sanctification without respect to any by considerations, or any advantages which may come to him by it. Tell me, do you rejoyce with the formalist because your profession has gotten you a little repute in the world, or a little quiet in your consciences? or do you rejoyce with the people of God, that you are more spiritual in duty, more humble, more mortified to the world, more like to God in every faculty of the soul, and more enlarged to him in all your affections; this is the true and proper joy of Gods people; it is not peace, but purity that pleases them; their comforts do increase, as their grace doth encrease; as they get more grace, so they get more joy, because nothing comforts them but the renewing of their souls, according to the image of God in Christ Jesus; now if this be the rise of thy joy, this is a good witness for thee that thou art a Christian indeed.

Sixtly,

Sixtly, Doest thou not rest in that measure of grace which thou seemest to have, but labourest after an infinite holinesse, to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*? 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. and to *be holy as God is holy*. If it be thus, thou art a Christian indeed, and thy hope which thou hast for Heaven, is a true hope, 1 *John* 3. 3. For he *that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself as he is pure. He is not the truest Christian that seemeth to have most, but he that really desires, and designes for most*; for the Lord measures us by these; the hungring Christian is the sound Christian; therefore *blessed*, yea undoubtedly *blessed are they that* thus *hunger and thirst after righteousness*, who have a kind of infiniteness in their desires after God and his holiness, and can say truly that their desires after this do exceed their desires after all other things.

Sevenly, Canst thou make thy appeals for thy principles, that they are spiritual as well as thy actions? that thou art not moved by base, and low, and carnal interest in what thou doest, but it is the honour of God, the love of his ways and holinesse that acts thee in thy general course? many may do much for God, and yet carry their own interest under it, as *Jehu* did; but if thy ends be for God as well as thy actions, then thou art a Christian altogether.

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Eightly, Canſt thou appeal to God for thy ſincerity before him? doeſt thou not look to men ſo much as to God in thy profeſſion, and labour to commend thy ſelf to them, but to God chiefly and mainly, and endeavoureſt in every thing to approve thy ſelf to him? If it be thus, then know, that though thou haſt many imperfections, and faileſt in every thing that thou doeſt, yet thou art altogether a Chriſtian; thou art perfect in the perfection of the Goſpel, though not in the perfection of the Law. I may invert that ſaying of the Apoſtle, *Phil.* 3.15. He ſayes as many as are perfect are thus minded; *I may ſay as many as are thus minded are perfect*; this is the perfection which the Goſpel requires and accepts; but if you come not up to a Goſpel-perfection, all your profeſſion and performances are in vain; for know that the Goſpel requires its perfection as ſtrictly as the Law did; only with this difference; the Law required perfect obedience in act, the Goſpel accepts ſincere obedience in act, and perfect in deſire and endeavour.

CHAP. IX.

A Uſe of Caution.

USE 3. The third and laſt Uſe ſhall be of caution to all, that you reſt not

not in such half perswasions; and In handling this, I shall lay down, first, some quickening motives, and secondly, conclude with some directions. I have spoken something in general to the use of the point. I shall draw toward a conclusion, when I have laid down a few motives to quicken you all to the particular application of the truth, and to a careful avoiding of that evil temper which I have discovered in the text. I have shown you that a man may be almost Christian, and yet never truly such; I have shewen you what it is to be such. I shall now shew you the evil of being such. I know some of you are or have bin convinced, that this is your condition, and yet you are quiet again, I shall now lay down a few things as motives to awaken your convictions, and to rowse you yet if it be possible, out of that slumbering state in which you are; I should be loath to leave you asleep after all that I have spoken, least you should sleep the sleep of death.

First, consider if you are not *altogether Christians*, you are then *altogether no Christians*, all your labour is lost, your profession will come to nothing, all that you have done will not profit you, you shall be reckoned among the heathen, and such as have not known God. Christ will one day profess to you that he knowes you not, all your bo-

bodily labour and external profession, though it should be accompanied with never so great expence & charge in the worship of God, will not be reckoned of, if your hearts be not right before God. We find a notable expression of the Lord to *Solomon* when he had built the Lord a Temple, with a vast expence of treasure, and had sacrificed two and twenty thousand oxen, and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep, which was a very large service, then the Lord appeares to him, 1 *King.* 9. 4. and sayes thus, *If thou wilt walk before me as thy Father David walked in integrity of heart and uprightnesse, to do all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgements, then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever.* Mark what a seasonable caution the Lord gives *Solomon*, think not now thou hast done enough because thou hast done all this for the building of my house; for although thou hast done very largely, and hast bin very magnificent in my service, yet know that all this will not serve my turn, if thy heart be not upright before me; all this will not profit thee, nor this people that glory in it; if thou shalt stick at other of my commands, it will not avail thee that thou hast obeyed me in this thing.

If thou dost not obey in all things, all thy obe-

obedience is nothing worth; yea though it may seem much, yet if truly weighed, it is very little. I shall insist a little upon this because it arises naturally from the words; and here shall endeavour to prove that *he that is but almost a Christian, is but the least part of a Christian.* If we compare the words of the text with *Pauls* answer to it, we shall finde that this sense may be safely put upon the same, which I hinted in opening the words. I told you (ἐν ὀλίγῳ) which is here rendred almost or within a little, may as well be rendred *in that which is little*: I am perswaded to be a Christan, or *I am a little perswaded.* I could in some things be content to be a Christian, but not in all. *Paul* seemes to take him in this sense by his reply which is, I wish thou were καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ, καὶ ἐν πολλῷ as well in much as in little, as well in greater matters as in less, such as I am. This is the case of many men under the word; they have some convictions upon them, and some perswasions wrought in them, and they would compound with Christ, they would follow him in some things, but not in all; and they would be Christians in some things, but not in others; and these things unto which they are perswaded to yeeld, and in which they will comply, they are but little things,

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and though *they seem to be altogether Christians to some, and almost such to all; yet they are but the least part of a Christian all the while*; he that comes neareſt to a Chriſtian, and is not ſo altogether, is very far from being a Chriſtian: though convictions and perſwaſions may be ſtrong in ſuch as are not yet regenerated, and they may go very far (as I have ſhewed you in opening the Doctrine.) Nay if they ſhould go ſo far, as to give their goods to the poor, and their bodies to the fire, and many ſuch things, which may ſeem very glorious in the eyes of men, yet let all that ſuch men do be ſeriouſly weighed and conſidered, and you ſhall find it exceeding ſmall. The moſt glorious hypocrite in the world, and the conningeſt formaliſt that hath put on the outſide of Religion, and in many things can hardly be diſcerned to be ſuch, is lighter then vanity it ſelf, compared with a true Chriſtian. Though theſe are like *Saul* among the people, taller by the head and ſhoulders, yet ſet him amongſt Chriſtians, and he is a Dwarf; and though he may be of great eſteem for a Chriſtian with ſome, yet he is ſtill a Chriſtian onely in little things. Now this is that which I ſhall labour to make plain and evident unto you, it being my great deſigne in this to pull down the high and loſty ſpirits of formal

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and empty professors, who content themselves to walk in a stinted profession, and whiles they look to some things in which they exceed many others, (as to some common works of conviction which they have had, and to some measure of persuasion, and to their outward profession) they think themselves to be some body, they are nothing, and they think they do much when indeed they do little. The Apostle speaking of the performances of hypocrites, 1 *Cor.* 13. 2. says expresly, if this were all that he had to shew to prove himself a Christian, he were not *onely little, but nothing. All these without grace would make me nothing.* These are great things with some men, and would make a man passe for such; but these things will not make a man seem any thing before the Lord; and if we look upon such aright, they will seem little to us, which I shall demonstrate four ways.

DEMONSTRATION 1:

1. A formalist is a Christian but in little things, because he does but little in comparison of Christ, who is his pattern, 1 *Joh.* 2. 6. *He that saies he abides in Christ, ought to walk as he walked.* Now if we compare the half-Christian with Jesus Christ, who is an example of holiness, unto whom every one that is called after his name should be con-

conformed, we shall finde him to be empty, and lame indeed; it would require much time to compare the life of such a person with Christ in particulars. But you will say, If we compare the best mens lives with Christ, they will be found to fall short as well as he, and the strongest Christians will be as nothing in comparison of him.

Ans. Though the best Christians have cause to be humbled for their failings, when they look to Christ whom they are to follow, yet there is a great difference betwixt these and the formalist in this thing. For though there be a seeming conformity in every hypocrite to Christ, yet it is but in appearance, not in reality, but there is a real and sincere conformity to Christ in every true Christian.

2. Though there be some likeness, yet there is more unlikeness to Christ in the half-Christian; but in the true Christian, though there be some unlikeness, yet there is more likeness; for first, though they have flesh as well as spirit, and a part unregenerate as well as regenerate, yet the spirit doth prevail over the flesh, and the regenerate over the unregenerate, so that this may, and does still passe for the principal part: it is not so with the formalist; for at the best he is carnal, and altogether flesh.

Secondly, Though he fails in every duty,

ty, and there is some corruption mixed with what he does, yet there is something of Christ in every duty, and this weighs down all his corruption; but in a formalist there is nothing of Christ in any duty that he performs; though he may exercise parts, and have great enlargements, yet there is nothing of grace in it, and so no conformity to Christ.

Thirdly, though there be a great difference betwixt the actions of Christ and a Christian, in respect of the perfection required in the Law (Christ did every thing according to the righteousness of the Law) yet in respect of that perfection which the Gospel admits of, there is not so much disproportion betwixt the obedience of Christ and a Christian. If the Law were to be judge of this, it would cast away all that a beleever does, and conclude it *no way like* to what Christ hath done, because *not every way like it*: but let the Gospel judge it, and it will acknowledge a great conformity in the one to the other, *Romans* 8. 29. yea there is such a conformity in a beleever to Christ, that he is accounted perfect, *Phil.* 3. 15. *Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded.* The work of holiness in him is so deemed, 2 *Cor.* 7. 1. *Perfecting holiness in the fear of God*; and particular graces

ces are pronounced perfect, 1 *John* 2. 5. all these are in the Gospel acceptation: so that with the favourable interpretation of the Gospel, you see a beleever is very like to Christ who is his pattern; but all the grace and favour that the Gospel doth shew to any, cannot so help a formalist, to make him to appear like to Christ in this sense.

4. Though in all things he does not attain to that measure of perfection to be able to walk as Christ walked, yet in his desires and designes he is so; there is the same minde in him that was in Christ; take the inner man of the heart, and you shall find it exactly like to Christ, renewed in knowledge, and in grace also according to his image, *Col.* 3. 10. *John* 1. 16. *Of his fulness have we all received grace for grace.* Look to his principles, and they are the same, love to God, and to the Word of God, and will of God; this is his meat and drink, as it was Christs, *John* 4. 34. This it was with *David*, *Psalm* 119. 97. *O how love I thy Law, it is my meditation all the day.* Look to his ends, they are like Christs, the honour and glory of God, and the good of other souls, as we find, *Phil.* 1. 21. 24. *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.* So that all things considered there is more agreement and conformity

betwixt the life of Chriſt and a true Chriſtian, then there is diſagreement, or non-conformity; they agree in more then they do differ in; but the life of a halting Chriſtian is ſo far ſhort of following, that he is not any way like him; ſo that upon this account, he that is but almoſt a Chriſtian does very little in all that he does, becauſe it is no way proportioned to the life of Chriſt, which is the copy after which every Chriſtian muſt write.

DEMONST. 2.

As all that ſuch a man does, is but little in compariſon of Chriſt whom he is to imitate: ſo alſo it is but little in compariſon of what the Saints do; he comes very far ſhort of the very weakeſt of the people of God, in theſe two particulars.

1. In actual performances; weigh what he does, and it is little to what a true Chriſtian does.

2. Look to his deſires and deſigns, and they fall yet more abundantly ſhort.

1. To their performances: and a man that is truly wrought upon, ſticks at no duty, he yeelds obedience to all the commands of God impartially; but the other profeſſes with reſerves, and yeelds obedience with reſpect to credit, or eaſe, or profit, or the peace of his own conſcience, and ſuch a man will not, cannot go ſo far as a

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ſound and throughly perſwaded Chriſtian.

2. He does not onely do all that is commanded, but he exerciſeth ſome grace in every thing that he doth; and upon this account it may be truly ſaid, the leaſt true beleever does more in the leaſt gracious performance then all the formaliſts, and half-Chriſtians in the world do, if they were all put together. What was the reaſon that the Widdows mite was greater then all the Phariſees great gifts? becauſe there was grace in that gift, this raiſed the value of it ſo much; ſo the leaſt exerciſe of grace is more then all the guilded performances of theſe half-Chriſtians: Though theſe can pray, and hear, and preach, and diſcourſe, and give alms, yet they cannot exerciſe any grace in theſe, there is nothing of Chriſt in theſe; and therefore they are of no value. One duty of a true beleever hath more weight and worth in it, then all that ſuch men ever did, or will do (while they are ſuch) to the end of the world.

Secondly, as they fall ſhort of the Saints in action, ſo much more in deſigne; for in this there is no more compariſon betwixt a formal half-Chriſtian, and a ſound Chriſtian, then is betwixt finite & infinite; for the deſire and aim of a gracious ſoul as I have ſhewne you, is after infinite holineſſe;

neſſe; it knows no bounds, and therefore cannot be compared with any thing that is limited, and bounded within a compaſſe, as the perſwaſions and profeſſions of one that is but *almoſt a Chriſtian* are. Now though the Law takes no notice of intentions, or of deſires, or deſignes to do a thing that is not done, but looks only to action, which is the perfection of intentions: yet the Goſpel ſets a high eſteem upon this where it is ſound and true; and the Lord accepts this, and eſteemes it as if it were brought forth into act, as in *David*, 1 *Kings* 8. 18. yea and he meaſures actions by this, as being a ſupplement unto them; yea, this makes ſmall things ſeeme very great, when they are weighed, becauſe they were done with great deſire and affection, and in a deſigne to ſome greater thing. Upon this account there is no proportion betwixt the deſires and deſignes of one that is but almoſt a Chriſtian, and him that is altogether ſuch; for the latter hath a greater reach with him in all that he doth, and does as far exceed him, as that which is infinite does exceed that which is finite.

DEMONS. 3.

He that is but almoſt a Chriſtian, does but little, if you compare what he does with what he omits. He ſeems to do ma-

ny things, but all that he does is not like that which he omits, which will be manifeſt upon theſe two accounts.

1. He does fewer things then he neg-leɛts.

2. He performs ſmall things, and omits great. Perhaps he may be ſaid to do many things with *Herod*, *Mark* 6. 20. that is in compariſon of former days; he began to obſerve many things which he made light of before, but theſe many things compared with the things which he ought to have done, would ſeem a very few. This I could eaſily ſhew you, if I ſhould open the life of a Chriſtian, and the duties of it, and ſhew you how exceeding broad the commands of *God* are; and when you did ſee how wide and deep theſe are, you would eaſily ſee how ſhort and weak ſuch a mans obedience is; but this will be too large a task at this time: yet I ſhall give you a hint of this, to clear the truth before us.

A formal profeſſor may do much to the obſervation of others, yet it is but little of what he ought to do, if we conſider,

Firſt, that his obedience to the commands does principally lie in negatives. He conſiders not ſo much what the commands requires, as what it prohibits, and he pleaſes himſelf rather in abſtaining from evil, then in doing of good, in being re-

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formed, then in being renewed; he thinks it enough that he turns from ſin, though he turn not to God; this is the firſt thing ſuch a man looks to, as the Phariſee, I thank God I am not as other men.

2. If he look to the preceptive part of the command, he is low and carnal in this; for he does not look to the ſpirituality of the Law; thus the Phariſees did, and the Papiſts do, who taught the people to be zealous of ſome few things, but neglected many more then they taught. Inſomuch that Chriſt told the people, that if *their righteouſneſs did not exceed the righteouſneſſe of the Scribes and Phariſees, they ſhould in no wiſe enter into the kingdom of God.*

That which is the reaſon of his falling ſhort in both theſe, is this; he takes the common ſenſe which men put upon the commands of God, and obſerving them in their ſenſe, he ſeems to do much; but in the ſenſe which God puts upon the word, he does nothing; thus while *Paul* walked by the interpretation of the commands which the Phariſees did put upon them, he in his own account is blameleſs, *Phil.* 3. 6. but when he began to ſee the ſpirituality of the Law, and to look upon it in the ſenſe and meaning of the ſpirit, then *Rom.* 7. 9. *Sin revived, and he dyed.* While we look upon the command of God with a

carnal and common eye, there is little duty discovered thereby; but let us look aright upon it, and every command will convince of much sin, and discover much duty: much more sin then many are convinc'd of, and much more duty then they submit unto, and then we shall see that they omit more duty then they perform. I will give you an instance in one command. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me.* Such men think that nothing is condemned here but Atheisme, to have no God at all, or idolatry in worshipping of stocks & stones, not minding that these things are condemned as sins against this command;

1. Ignorance of God: for how can we have him as our God, whom we know not?

2. Unbelief: if we know him, and do not believe what he speaks by promise, or by threats; for when we fly from the word of God, and go to any thing else to help us, we make a god, and say, It is safer to rely here then there; and when we do not fear the threat, but run to this or that shelter, we make that our god, as if we could be defended from the power and justice of God.

3. Want of love to God, or not loving him sutable to himself: to acknowledge him to be God, and not to love him, is a contradiction: and to say we love him, and yet

yet not to love him intenſly with all our hearts, and with all our might, is not to love him as our God.

4. The over-loving of any creature: this is the ſetting up of another *god*; when we ſet up any thing in our affections, and in our eſteem in the higheſt place, this is the ſetting up of another god, becauſe we ſet up ſomething in the place of *God*.

5. Pride of ſpirit: ſetting up too high an eſteem of our ſelves, and of our own wiſdom or righteouſneſs; this is the ſetting up of another god; therefore *David* layes the reaſon of neglecting *God* and his worſhip here; *Pſalm* 10. 4. out of the pride of their heart, they will not ſeek after God.

6. Carnal joy: to delight in any thing ſo much as in God, and his worſhip and ways, is idolatry alſo. That which brings in moſt comfort is our god: if God will ever be a Heaven to us, his worſhip and ſervice muſt be our Heaven here.

7. Luke-warmneſs in his ſervice: for to have no God, and to worſhip him as if he were none, is all one; and to ſet up a god of ſilver or ſtone, or to worſhip God as if he were no better, and knew not the heart, are things of the ſame import.

8. Slightneſs of ſpirit: which is, when either we ſuffer our hearts and thoughts to

wander we know not, and care not whether, and think not upon God, or when we think ſlightly of him; the firſt of theſe *David* obſerves as a ſufficient ground of the Atheiſme of many in his time, *Pſalm* 10.4. God is not in all his thoughts; and God himſelf ſeems to take ſpecial notice of the ſecond, and threatens ſore for it, *Pſalm* 50. 21. thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf.

9. Neglect of ſeeking God: this is a great breach of this command; publique and private neglect of this duty. God puts thoſe men amongſt the heathens himſelf, *Jer.* 10. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy Name.*

10. Unthankfulneſs for mercy received; this is a principle in the light of nature that we muſt acknowledge *God* in all that we enjoy; therefore the heatheniſh idolaters did never obtain any great victory, or enjoy any great thing, but they did ſacrifice to, and praiſe their gods. To have a *God*, and not to call upon him by prayer, and thankſgiving, not to take our comforts out of his hands by the one, and put them into his hands by the other, is to ſay we have no *God*, and to ſay we have no need of him, which is an ungodding of him. Thus I might ſhew you in other com-

commands how much sin is reproved which a formalist is not convinc'd of; and as there is much in the negative part of this command which he sees not; so there is a preceptive part which he considers not, which is to have *God* for our *God*, and this requires many things.

1. That we know *God*; for without knowledge of *God* we cannot have him for ours.

2. Acknowledgment of him; we must own and professe him to be ours, and to be what he is to us.

3. Beleeving in him; we must take his word as the best assurance, and receive all his commands and threatnings for truth.

4. To love him as the chiefest good, and to desire communion with him as being the chiefest blessing: for to account any thing better, or to desire any thing like him, is not to have him for our God. We must say as *David*, *Psalm* 73. 25. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, neither have I desired in the earth any thing in comparison of thee.*

5. To fear him, and to tremble at his word: therefore the worshipping of God is set out thus by the Prophet, *Isai.* 8. 13. *Make him your dread and your feare*, *Isai.* 66. 2.

6. We must delight in him above all

things: for the chiefeſt good enjoyed muſt needs breed the greateſt joy that is poſſible in the hearts of the creatures.

7. To be zealous for his glory: we do not ſerve him as *God*, unleſs we ſerve him with very intenſe affections, and ſet up his glory above all glory, and mind his honour & glory as *God* himſelf doth mind it, who ſeeks it in every thing he doth. Theſe and many more duties are required in this command; as, To remember him at all times, to have him before your eyes in the creatures, and our hearts in meditation; to call upon him in all ſtreights, to be thankful to him in all enjoyments, to ſeek his favour in all conditions, and to labour to preſerve the evidences we have of it above all precious things. This is to have *God* for your *God*; thus you might ſee if I ſhould run through other commands of *God*, that they are exceeding broad; and that the man that ſeems to be *almoſt a Chriſtian*, does but little in compariſon of what he omits; the ſins which he reſtrains by his interpretation of the command, are few to what the command forbids, and the duties which he performs, are few of thoſe which the command requires, and he neglects. In this reſpect the formal half-Chriſtian does leſſe then he leaves undone, becauſe he does ſome duties which lie more

more visible in the Word; but such as are not so easily seen, and generally acknowledged he omits; he performs publick duties which come under common observation, but he omits private duties, which are more then the publick duties of a Christian, and he abstaines from the grosse and publick sins of the outward man, but makes no conscience of the sins of the heart, and thoughts, which are more then the sins of the outward man.

Besides all this, in every duty which he performs, he omits more then he performs; the duties of a Christian are complicated; there is no duty performed singly, if it be performed aright. Many things must concur in the right performance of any duty; as for example, if a man comes to hear the word, there is much more required in that duty, then the bare hearing or attending to what is said, or the carrying it away with us in our books, or in our memories, or the repeating of it when we come home to our families, though many do not minde thus much that hear the word; there are these three things especially to be minded in the right performing of this duty.

1. To prepare for it.
2. To keep the heart in it.
3. To be careful o[f] the word, and our hea[r]ts after it. He hath not heard the word

aright that hath not heard it thus. Now in every one of these there are many things required, as in preparing to it we are,

First, to get our hearts affected with the pretiousness of the word that we are to hear.

Secondly, to consider, and be humble under our natural deadness and inability to profit by the word.

Thirdly, to mourn over our former unprofitableness.

Fourthly, to get a sence of the wants of our souls.

Fifthly, to heighten our resolutions of cleaving unto the Lord, and to bring a full purpose of heart with us to the Ordinance, to submit to all that *God* shall say.

In hearing of the word we are required,

First, to see if our hearts be present.

Secondly, to keep *God* in our eye, and to make him our dread and our fear, and to get our hearts affected with the consideration of his Majesty.

Thirdly, to take part with every word of conviction, and to receive truth; and to side with it, though it strike at a right eye, or a right hand.

After the hearing of the word, the duty is not ended; for then it must be thy care,

First, to keep those impressions alive, which

which the Word hath made upon thy ſoul.

Secondly, to have a ſpecial care of the bent of the heart, to labour to prevent backſliding.

Thirdly, to enquire whether thou haſt profited by the Ordinance, and how.

Fourthly, to cover the Word by prayer, and meditation, as the Husbandman doth the ſeed, leaſt the fowls of the air ſteal it away.

Fifthly, to put that ſpeedily in practice which the word hath convinc'd ought to be done, or to lay that down which the word ſays muſt be left. Thus it is in praying, and every other duty; there are many things to be minded, and done in every duty which the half-Chriſtian doth not mind; and while he only looks to the viſible part of it, and neglects all theſe concomitant duties, he does manifeſtly omit more then he does perform; thus it is manifeſt in the firſt ſenſe, that ſuch a man does perform leſſe then he does omit, becauſe he omits many things, and performs but few. Again, he does little in compariſon of what he omits, if we conſider that *the things which he omits are greater then thoſe which he doth perform*; he is careful and ſtrict in ſome things, but they are little things; but he neglects the great and weighty things of God; as it was ſaid of the

the Scribes and Phariſees, they paid tith of Mint and Commin, but neglected the great and weighty matters of the Law. He omits thoſe duties which are of greateſt account, in which the life and power of godlineſs lies; he is in the form of Religion, but minds not the ſpirit and ſtrength of it, which conſiſteth not in praying, reading, hearing, receiving of Sacraments, giving of Alms, or abſtaining from the outward acts of ſin, but it lies in the frame and diſpoſition of the heart to Godward in all theſe. It lies in the fearing and loving of God, beleeving and delighting in him; this is that which God eyes and values in every duty. But he that is not altogether a Chriſtian, is not acquainted with theſe things; he is not acquainted with heart-examination, or watching over his thoughts, he cares not about the ordering of his heart aright in duties, and the exerciſing of grace in them. Now alas, when theſe things are abſtracted from duties, what are they? they are nothing in *Gods* account, and ſo (or all his reformation it is very little, when we conſider it is but in the outward man; when he abſtains from the outward acts of ſin, but not from the inward; his reformation is not mortification, and alas all outward reformation hath little in it in compariſon

of

of the mortification of the leaſt ſin, ſo that if you ſet his duties againſt his neglects either in number or weight, it is manifeſt he doth but little to what he leaves undone.

DEMONSTRATION 4.

He that is but almoſt a Chriſtian, is but little a Chriſtian, becauſe there is very little in that little he does; it is of little account and eſteem with *God*, nor with good men, and that upon ſeveral accounts.

Firſt, becauſe his heart is not in what he does, and that being not in it, which *God* calls eſpecially for, he values it not. When the children of *Iſrael* did continue the worſhip of *God*, and obſervation of many things commanded, he charges them as if it had been will worſhip, becauſe it was not worſhip according to his will. Who hath required theſe things at your hands, ſays he, *Iſai.* 1.12.

Secondly, ſuch mens obedience will not be owned at the laſt day, when Chriſt ſhall come and ſurvey every mans work at the great day; he will ſay to ſuch as come with ſuch half convictions and performances, *I know you not.*

Thirdly, there will come a time when ſuch perſons themſelves will be made to ſee and to acknowledge that there is but little in all that they have done when they

they ſhall be forc'd to cry out as the fooliſh Virgins did, *Our lamps are gone out*, *Mat.* 25. 8.

Fourthly, Satan will make but a very ſlender account of all that theſe men do, or have done; alas how eaſily will he ſhake ſuch mens hopes and confidence, as a reed is ſhaken with the wind? In time of temptation how does he batter their reſolutions, and in time of ſickneſs or death? how will he take the houſe which they have built, and pluck it down about their ears? he will make nothing of the ſtorming of ſuch a ſoul, but will lay their ſtrength in the duſt in a moment. This *Job* intimates, *Job* 27. 7, 8. that at ſuch a time the hypocrites own heart will reproach him.

Fifthly, all that ſuch a man does is ſo little, that it is not worthy to be compared with the leaſt performance of a gracious heart; he that does leaſt, and does it ſincerely, does more then he that does moſt in a way of formality; for there is more done in the leaſt act in which grace is exerciſed, then in all thoſe things in which gifts and parts are exerciſed without grace; for this is that only which makes things down weight with *God*. Upon this account it was that the Lord Jeſus ſet a higher value upon the gift of the poor Widdow, who caſt in two mites, then upon all the great

great gifts of the Scribes and Phariſees.

Sixthly, there is ſo little in all that is done without grace, that God accounts it worſe then nothing, he reckons it as prophaneſs: it is with God no more then the cutting off a doggs neck, *Iſai.* 66. 3.

Laſt of all, how ever the profeſſion and performances of ſuch a man may ſeem great, yet they will appeare very ſmall by that time deductions are made for what is to be deducted; do but deduct out of his performances, what is done upon low and carnal principles, and what is done upon baſe ends and intereſts of his own, there will be very little left of all that he ſeems to do; as for example, *Jehu* went very far in obſerving many of the commands of God, and appeared very zealous in the proſecution of them; but by that time we abate *Jehu* for his own intereſt, and for the ſettlement of the kingdom in his own hand, we ſhall find little left ſtanding upon the account of obedience to the command; yea when the Lord reckons up what *Jehu* had done by one of the Prophets with theſe deductions, he cals not what he had done obedience, or zeal for the Lord, but murder, *Hoſ.* 1. 4. ſuch interpretations may thoſe actions have, which in themſelves are good, and carry a great appea-

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rance with them of obeying and honouring God, when they are weighed and the dreggs or drosse of those false principles and ends which are with those that perform the same are considered.

CHAP. 10.

The second Consideration.

Consideration 2. *If you be not Christians in good earnest, all that you do will but aggravate your sins*; your complyance with God in some things will not excuse, but aggravate your breach with him in other things; this will bring your sins under other aggravating circumstances, which other mens sins do not fall under; your sins will be judged hypocrisies in that they were under a profession, and sins against knowledge in that they were under convictions, and contempt of Christ and his ways, in as much as Christ came so near to you in the word, and yet you put him by.

Consid. 3. *You have the least, or will have the least to say for your selves of any people.* Of all men, halters in Religion will have the least excuse. We find when the Prophet *Elijah* dealt with the children of *Israel* in this case, they were all silent before him; one man strikes a whole

whole congregation dumb when he charges this ſin upon them; they who uſe to have their excuſes and pleas at hand in all other caſes, have none in this, 1 *King* 18. 21. *The people anſwered not a word.* Of all men in the world, theſe will be left without excuſe; and of all ſins, halting and lukewarmneſs will appear in their nakedneſs.

Conſid. 4. *You are the greateſt diſhonour to God of any people*; you diſhonour the Father, the Son, and the Spirit; for men look upon you as men ſerving and owning *God*, and they judge of *God*, and his worſhip, by you.

Firſt, you diſhonour the Father; men have low thoughts of his Majeſty, and holineſs, when they ſee thoſe who go under the notion of profeſſors, and owners of the ways of *God*, to be ſlight and cold in his worſhip; when they ſee the ſpirits of men that worſhip *God* cold in it, and ſtinted, and ſhut up in ſuch and ſuch a compaſſe of profeſſion, ſetting bounds to themſelves! this and that they will do, and no more. O how can men think that the God whom you have to do withall is a holy *God*. Oh the mean and baſe thoughts men do harbour of God, from the beholding the luke-warm converſations of ſuch half Chriſtians!

Secondly, you diſhonour Chriſt and the Goſpel under which you live. Oh my friends,

friends, is it not a reproach to Christ, that it should be said, This life which you live in, is that life which Christ came to purchase, and for which he laid downe his life; did Christ come to give life, yea and abundance of life? *John* 10.10. and is this that life? Is that life which many of us live (who would be accounted partakers of the life of Christ) like that life which Christ came to give? the Evangelist says, we receive grace for grace from him; but where is it, and when is it exercised? Ah my freinds, Christ is reproached in this, when we call and account that the life of Christ, which is but an abomination to him; Nay this is a reproach to the Gospel times, in which was promised a greater measure of grace to be poured forth, and that God would give a more choice and excellent spirit to his people, *Zach.* 12.10. But do not the low & lukewarm tempers of many pretended Christians bring mean thoughts upon the Gospel, and the times of it, while they live much below the professors of Religion in the times of the Law?

3. It is a reproach to the spirit of *God*, whose office it is to sanctifie and renew the heart of his people: what honour does the Scripture put upon this? it calls it *The beauty of holiness*, *Psalm* 110. 3. as if there were no beauty but this. Now what a vili-

a vilifying of the spirit of *God* is it, to set up a dead, cold, heartlesse profession without life and vigour instead of the sanctifying work of the Spirit of *God*? as if we should say, Lo, this is all that the spirit works in the hearts of *Gods* people. Doubtless it is from hence that men and women have such meane and low thoughts of sanctification, because they see so little in the lives of those that profess it, and many do believe that it is nothing but a pretence and a shadow, and a notion taken up amongst men; and if they do but go to Church sometimes, and say their prayers, and beleeve as the Church beleeves, they are as much sanctified as any, for they see no more in others then in themselves, but that some can talk more then they. Thus I say the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, they are all vilified, & all by reason of those who call themselves Christians, but are not, and if there be a wo to that man by whom offences come, then much more wo to those men by whom all these offences come.

Conf. 5. *You are the greatest blots to Religion in the world*: All the Apostasies of Professors which have hardened many mens hearts against Religion, have risen from the midst of you. There was never an Apostate in the world, but he was first a luke-

luke-warm professor. Look to all the gross and damnable errors which have broken forth, and the horrible Apostasies which have been from the profession of the truth, and they sprung up amongst those who have been halters with *God*; Some that have seemingly, and in part received the truth, but have not received it in the love of it. These are the people which *God* hath given up to strong delusions, and are swept away with abominable errors, and these have fallen away in time of temptation, because they were not rooted and grounded in the truth; but there was never any one did Apostatize and fall away wholly and fully from the truth that was altogether a Christian. If you would not be Apostates from the truth, pray that your hearts may be sound in the statutes of the Lord, *Psal.* 119. 80.

Consid. 6. *You are men upon whom the Devil hath the greatest advantage of any men in the world*; he choses you out as instruments to carry on all his great works, and to further his grand designes in the world; by your help it is, that he manages all the affairs of his kingdom: it is a dreadful thing to think that you should be the chief pillars of Satans throne; he chuses not out the *prophane*, because they are too gross, they will be easily *discovered*; he

he cannot easily engage the *godly*, because they will *discover him*: the *first* he uses not because they are not so *fit for his work*; the *second* he cannot engage, because they *do not like his work*; but when he cannot speed any where else, then he comes to you the formalist and luke-warm professor, who never fails him; but amongst you he finds instruments enough, and those he most uses for his transactions; therefore the devil made use of *Judas*, and of the false brethren in the Churches, & of the Scribes and Pharisees against *Christ*, and the devout women against *Paul*, *Gal.*2.4. *Acts* 13.15. he uses these rather then any other.

First, because these are most able to hurt the people of God, knowing their ways and counsels as the false brethren did, 2 *Cor.* 11.26.

Secondly, because their opposition to Religion seems to carry in it some weight, and reason, and men judge there is some great evil in it which these men see, or they would never oppose. The Scribes and Pharisees would not so oppose as they do, if they did not see more evil in these things then we do, *John* 7. 48. *Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees beleeved on him?*

Thirdly, it is greater reproach to Religion and to the the professors of it, when the devil can ingage some against it that have profest it:

it: as the Lord wounds the kingdom of Sathan by converſion: ſo doth Sathan wound the kingdom of Chriſt by tempting men to Apoſtaſy.

Conſi. 7. You are the greateſt hinderer of the ſalvation of other men. For many have their eyes upon you, and they reaſon thus with themſelves; theſe men are wiſe men, and civil men, they are good men, and will be wary, they know what they do, and we will follow them, we will go no farther then they go. Many that will not take a Drunkard, or prophane Swearer for example in Religion, will take one of you for a preſident, whom he ſees to walk civilly, and morally in your converſations, and perhaps he will give more heed to you, becauſe of your wiſdom and warineſs in the world, then to thoſe who walk more cloſe with God; as we ſee the people looked more to the Scribes and Phariſees then to Chriſt, and it was not the Publican that kept off ſo many from Chriſt, but the Phariſee; ſo I ſay, that wo may fall upon you which was pronounc'd againſt them, and it is a fearful one, *Mat.* 23. 11. becauſe they neither entered into the kingdom of heaven themſelves nor yet ſuffered thoſe who were entring in to go in.

Conſ 8. *You are a people of whom the Lord ſpeaks no good.* God is ſo tender that he will

will not paſs by any good where ever he finds it; if it be never ſo ſmall, he will not paſs it over without obſervation; yet when he ſpeaks of ſuch as you are, he cannot afford them one good word; we find the Lord who will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking flax, would take notice of ſome good that was in *Abijah* who was of *Jeroboams* houſe, 1 *King.* 14. 13. when he comes to ſpeak of the Church of *Laodicea* who was of this lukewarm temper, he ſpeaks never a word in commendation of her, *Rev.* 3. 17. She had high thoughts of herſelf, but God thought not ſo of her. He reproves the reſt of the Churches for their ſins and threatens ſore, but he commends ſome good in every one except *Laodicea*; thus I ſay the Lord will ſpeak no good of you; you may perhaps think as highly of your ſelves as ſhe did, but at the laſt day are like to hear the worſt of your ſelves of any generation of men whatſoever.

Conſ. 9. *God doth not onely ſpeak no good of them, but they are of all ſorts of men moſt deſpiſed of him;* We uſe to ſay he is poor that God hates; ſurely then the half Chriſtian is a poor man; if there be any one poor under heaven, for no man carries ſuch a brand of infamy and reproach upon him as he doth. God does abominate ſuch

a man

a man more then he does the prophane *Esau*, or the scoffing *Ismael*, or the unclean *Sodomites*; men that are down-right Atheists, or plain Idolators, or that have no pretences to the fear or service of God are not such an abhorring to God as these men are? I will convince you by two, or three instances of this, that you may see and fear to rest in such a state as this is. See such a temper compared with him who has no Religion at all, *Rev.* 3. 15. *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot, I would thou wert cold or hot*, God wishes they were rather stark cold. God had rather men had no pretence to Religion at all, that they were stupid, and had no life nor motion at all, then to move thus; better be without sense, then not to have a true sense; better have no convictions nor stirrings under the Word, nor pretence to love or fear God, then not to be in good earnest; better to do nothing, then to stick at any thing. Now this must needs be a sad profession which *God* dislikes rather then no profession.

Secondly, see it compared with idolatry, which of all sins which do openly shew themselves, does most affront God to his face; and therefore the Lord threatens the setting up of Idols in his jealousie, in the second Commandement; the Drunkard,

the

the swearer, the unclean person, do not so openly oppose God as the Idolater, because he does manifestly ungod him. But he that is a down-right idolater, is not so bad as he that is a halter in the worship of *God*; the Prophet complains of the present temper of the children of *Israel*, that they did *halt betwixt two opinions*, they would not cleave to *Baal*, nor yet to God, 1 *King.* 18. 21. And *Elijah said unto all the people, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the LORD be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.* So it may be said to the half Christian, why do you halt betwixt a *Baal*, and God? to have a heart divided betwixt God and corruption, is worse then to serve sin with all the heart.

Thirdly, see it compared with open prophaness; we find the servant who did but comply with the wicked and prophane, in eating and drinking with them that were drunken, yet threatned more then all the rest, *Mat.* 24. 49, 50, 51. *The Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not ware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* He did not cast off his subjection to his master altogether; he said not that he had no master,

neither did he cast off the thoughts of his masters coming, but he removed them a little from him; and when he had done this, we do not find that he was a drunkard, but he began to associate with them, he began to neglect his duty, and to comply with the prophane whom he should have curbed; and now the Lord passes by them, and seems to take less notice of their open wickedness, then of his secret complyance with it; thus it is with many who will not be, or dare not be swearers, or drunkards, but they will keep a hand for the drunkard, or the scoffer, they will be the friends and familiars with such in secret; they have not gotten so much zeal for God; and for his wayes, as to despise a vile person, *Psalm.* 15. 4. but such as these God complains of by the Prophet, *Hos.* 7. 8. *Israel was a cake not turned*; if you look upon their outside, they were Christians; but if you could see the *inside*, they were idolaters. Such God will spue out of his mouth, with the greatest loathing possible; he does most commonly cast them out of their profession here, and out of their Church-priviledges if they be under any, 1 *Cor.* 11. 19. or if not here, when he comes to judgement, he will surely remember these; they shall be cast out before men and

Angels,

Angels, *Mat.* 24. 51. *They shall have their portion with hypocrites, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*; these shall have a place in Hell by themselves, the prophanest sort of men will hiss them out of their company, the Devils will stand off from them, because they seemed to be distinct from them in the world; and as for the godly, they shall be separated from them, because they were not of them. Thus these hypocrites shall have a place by themselves, and if any worse then other, it shall be theirs. As of all sorts of sinners, these are the worst, because hypocrites; so of all kind of hypocrites, these are the worst. It is a great mistake amongst the common people who think none are hypocrites but they which make some extraordinary profession of Religion, they judge them to be hypocrites; and them onely who make a greater profession then the common standard (by which the multitude measure their Religion) will allow of: so that none are reckoned for hypocrites, but those who are noted for professors. This I say is a great mistake; for there is not a wicked man or woman in this place, how prophane soever, but is an hypocrite, for every one here does profess himself a Christian; and if it be not so, he is an hypocrite;

there is not one here that will renounce all intereſt in Chriſt, or that will openly in words refuſe obedience to him, yea there is not one here but does at ſome times, in ſome wayes profeſſe a ſubjection to him, and ſhall therefore at the laſt, not onely be condemned with the prophane, for ſaying Chriſt ſhall not reign over them, but they ſhall be judged with the Hypocrite for ſaying that they go when they go not, as the evil ſon, *Matthew* 21. 30. who added a lie to his diſobedience. But although amongſt them that call themſelves Chriſtians; there be many kindes of hypocrites, and all that take the name of Chriſtian upon them, are either Saints or hypocrites, yet theſe which are *almoſt Chriſtians*, are the worſt of hypocrites; he that is *almoſt a Chriſtian*, is of the higheſt form of hypocrites; the higher a man riſes in profeſſion, if it be not in truth, the higher he ariſes in hypocriſie; for he that does not follow God fully, when he is at the height, he is but *almoſt a Chriſtian*, and that is but a raiſed piece of hypocriſie; and when a man is in this condition, this is his miſery, that all his profeſſion does but increaſe his ſin, he is ſo much the more an elaborate hypocrite. Of all perſons Chriſt cries out againſt theſe in the Scripture;

ture; how oſten does he cry out, Woe to *you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites*? for all the people of the Jews by virtue of their profeſſion were ſuch, who did not obey the truth. But theſe did excel in profeſſion, they went beyond others in many degrees, and yet did not love the truth with all their hearts, therefore he cries out more againſt the Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites, then againſt the Publicans and harlots, Hypocrites, *Mat.* 22. 13, 14, 15, 23, 25. Chriſt did not cry out againſt theſe for Hypocrites, for doing more then others, but for not doing what they ought to do; Hypocriſie lies not in making more profeſſion then we ought, but in doing leſs then we do profeſs. Therefore although he condemned their hypocriſie, yet he commended their profeſſion, and ſet people to imitate and exceed them, *Mat.* 5. 20. *Except your righteouſneſs exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

Conſ. 10. *Theſe are the greateſt deſpiſers of God, of Heaven, and holineſs, of any people.* Theſe bring the greateſt contempt upon the kingdom of Heaven of any, becauſe they come in ſight of it, and then go back, which is a manifeſt contempt. God was more angry with the people of

Israel, for talking of returning back to *Egypt*, when they were in the wilderneſs, then for all their unwillingneſs to come out of *Egypt*. Nay, he was more offended at their unwillingneſs to go into *Canaan*, when they came upon the borders of it, then for all their murmuring at the red Sea, eſpecially when they had ſeen the fruit of it; this was a manifeſt contempt of the good land; for if they ſhould have gone back after they came ſo near unto *Canaan*, it would have brought more diſcredit upon that land then if they had never ſtirr'd out of *Egypt*; for if they had refuſed to go out of *Egypt*, all men would have imputed it to their idleneſs; but if they had returned, the fault would have been laid upon the land. If a man paſſes by your ſhops, and inquires not for any commodity, you take little notice of him; but if he ſee your goods and cheapen them, and leave them, he either condemns the commodity or the ſeller, either it is not good, or it is too dear: So *men that look not after Heaven, do but neglect it; but thoſe who come to buy, and yet will not come up to the terms, theſe diſcredit it.* When men come ſo near it as the young man did, who was offered it, and yet left it when there was but one thing lacking, theſe do bring the greateſt diſlike upon

upon the things of God, of any men alive; for theſe men do in effect ſay, it is not ſo much worth; they ſay that God offers it at too dear a rate; and what greater reproach can there be caſt upon the kingdom of heaven: then to ſay it is too dear? The prophane ſort of men do but neglect it, they never ask after it, they cheapen not; but the half Chriſtian he ſees and asks, and cheapens, but will not buy; this is a villifying of it. This is your caſe, you that are almoſt Chriſtians; you will be found the greateſt contemners of the wayes of God; for other men fall ſhort out of ignorance, as having not ſeen or known God; but you come oftentimes ſo near, that you ſee the Kingdom of God, as *Baalam* did, whoſe eyes were opened, you taſte of the powers of the World to come, you are made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have found a ſweetneſs in the good Word of God; for you now to ſtop here, or go back again, it muſt needs be a contemning of the kingdom; you ſay as that young man did. There is not ſo much worth in the ſame to countervail the loſs of all other things, Chriſt will put that interpretation upon your motions, which he did upon the Jews, *John* 15. 24. For you have ſeen and hated both me and my Father. The ſins of ignorant

persons are accounted but neglect, but the sins of such as are convinc'd, will be judged hating of God; because such do knowingly cast away the offers of the Gospel, and refuse the kingdom of God, and their refusing is not a bare neglecting to receive it, but a despising of it.

Consid. 11. Such men have the least pleasure of any. They stand betwixt the *pleasures of the world*, and the *pleasures of the Saints*, and enjoy neither. Such a man cannot share with the Epicure in the pleasures of the flesh, because of his convictions; these give a check to his lusts; so that he cannot take that liberty that his heart doth desire; his unhappiness is that his heart is not *mortified to the love of sin, yet he is dead to the pleasure of sin*; that which is sweet to others is bitter to him; not because he loves it not, but because he finds some gnawing of the worm of conscience, which will not let him be quiet in his lusts. If he go to the Ale-house, he sits uneasily there, because conscience accuses him; if he goes not thither, he is not quiet, because his heart is there. In the midst of his laughter, there is heaviness in his heart; in his sinful pleasures he is sad, and enjoys not what others do, or what he has done

done in former times: Time was, he could hearken to his carnal appetite in any thing, and it was pleaſant to him; but it is not ſo now; conſcience either reſtrains him from the ſin he loves, and this cannot pleaſe him, or elſe it with-holds from him the pleaſure of the ſin he commits, and this muſt needs be ſad. Beſide this, he loſeth the pleaſure of duty, if conſcience puts him upon any duty, he loſes alſo the pleaſure of that, becauſe it is not performed with an upright heart; he wants a new nature to make the duty pleaſant unto him; he wants holy and ſpiritual affections in it, to make him delight in his work; and although in ſome Ordinances he may have ſome flaſhes of joy, yet he wants that conſtant ſpiritual comfort and refreſhing which Gods people have in the ſervice and worſhip of God; he cannot ſay that his chiefeſt joy lies in his duties; he cannot ſay as *David*, that God puts more this way into his heart, then when Corn and Wine increaſeth, *Pſa.* 4. 7. Nay, we find that this may be, and is the frame of ſuch as find no comfort in following God, that they are burthened with duty; the people of *Iſrael* who delighted to approach unto God, as we find, *Iſa.* 58. 2. they ſeek me daily, and delight to know my wayes, yet ſaid, When

will the Sabbath be over? *Am.* 85. And ſuch as theſe do often upon this account Apoſtatize from the wayes of God, and then they do reproach them moſt of any perſons, as thoſe hypocrites did, *Mal.* 3. 14. who ſaid, It is in vain to ſerve God. Now lay theſe things together, and ſee in what a ſad caſe theſe men are; they have neither the pleaſures of the wicked, nor of the godly: Wicked men have their good things here, the godly have their good things hereafter. *The wicked ſeem to have one Heaven, the godly hath ſometimes two* (a Heaven of peace and joy in the Holy Ghoſt here, and a Heaven hereafter alſo) *but the half Chriſtian hath no Heaven*, neither here nor hereafter. *The open prophane have one heaven, the godly two, the hypocrite none.* So that it may be ſaid of them truly, that they are of all men moſt miſerable, becauſe their hope and comfort is onely in this life, and yet it is nothing conſiderable to other mens.

Conſid. 12. Such men as theſe do loſe themſelves to all parties. They are eſteemed of by none, though they deſign to be honored of all. Firſt of all, they loſe their credit and repute with their old companions by their profeſſion. That reformation which

which they have made already, may perhaps make the profaner and looſer ſort caſt them off as not fit for them. And although they deſpiſe them for their profeſſion, yet the godly will not heartily embrace them, they are as much diſ-ſatisfied with their profeſsion, that it is no more, as the other are troubled that it is ſo much. Thus they are caſt off by their old friends before they are received of the new, and by this means they are diſtitute of both. The prophane ſort think they are too ſtrict for them, and the godly ſuſpect they are too large for them; they are too hot for the one, and too cold for the other; one thinks he looks too like a Puritan, and the other doubts he is too much a formaliſt, and upon this account he is deſerted of both; like the Bat, which is in the body like a Mouſe, and yet winged like a bird, is excluded from the ſociety both of Birds and Beaſts. They are plac'd betwixt the godly and the wicked, as ſome Divines have drawn *Solomons* Picture, betwixt Heaven and Hell, not knowing in which to place him. If they ſhould be placed among the prophane they would be offended, having eſcaped the corruptions of the world through Luſt; and if you place them among the Godly, you ſhould wrong the generation of the

juſt.

just. I knew in my time in the University, three Doctors heads of houses,

One was an Innovator.
The second accounted a Puritan.
The third was reckon'd a Neuter. A witty Scholler presented them thus.

The first in a Coach driving to *Rome*.
The second driving to *Genevah*.
The third running on foot, begging sometimes the one, sometimes the other to receive him; yet both refusing. Such are these Neuters in Religion, left out by all. All those which are but almost Christians, are but Neuters at the best. They are not what they were, and they are not what they would seem to be; and so being of neither kind, they are refused of both. It is hard for any man to make any profession of a change without troubling the prophaner part of men; and it is as hard for any man that is not truly changed, to make such a profession as to please the godly. The people of *God* will find out their cold formal spirits, under the most zealous profession that may be; that profession must be very handsomly put on, that must cover the old unregenerate heart for a time; but if it should do so, it is not like

like to hide it long from the eyes of Gods people; and when this is once diſcoverd, there is no greater abhorring to them.

The Neuter ſtill hath leaſt friends, ſo hath the half Chriſtian. *He is deſpiſed by the prophane, rejected of the godly, and loved heartily of none.*

Conſid. 13. Such people are in greateſt danger of being hardened of any. The light and knowledge which they have, together with the profeſſion which they make does but dazle them, and thereby they are befool'd into a good opinion of themſelves, and reſt quiet in their ſuppoſed good eſtate until the day of wrath comes upon them unawares: There is more hope of converting a prophane wretch, then a formal profeſſour. For a man hath more advantage upon ſuch a one, having ſomething more to take hold of in him, then in the other. If a man deal with a drunkard, ſwearer, or unclean perſon, you have his natural light, common received principles, and his conſcience to take hold of, which will all take part with you in this caſe: But natural light, common principles and natural conſcience will not ſerve to detect this man, they will all rather riſe up and plead his cauſe. For a little profeſſion and weak performances ſerve to quit the conſci-

Conſcience, and make it lie down well ſatisfied. Him that conſcience would not ſuffer to be quiet in an Ale-houſe, nor in the pollutions of the World, yet may be quiet in the performance of ſome duties, though they be done without the exerciſe of any grace. It is harder to faſten a conviction upon ſuch mens ſpirits, then upon any others, becauſe their ſins lie more inward, and are hid from the eyes of men; yea and therefore from the light of their own conſciences. Hence it is that the Lord makes the conviction of unbelief ſo great a work, *Joh.* 16. 7, 8. he ſayes the ſpirit ſhould come to convince of this. Natural conſcience does convince of drunkenneſs and ſwearing, of idolatry and uncleanneſs, but it doth not convice of unbelief, becauſe this is a ſin of the heart. Nay, *Unbelief is not always alike eaſie to be detected, it is more eaſily diſcovered when it lies under prophaneſs, then when it lies under profeſſion*; it is eaſier to convince a drunkard unbeleever, or an unclean unbeleever, then a praying unbeleever; becauſe his unbelief lies more curiouſly hid, and is where we would not expect. Hence it is that the Scribes and Phariſees were ſo hardly convinc'd, and ſo few of them were converted by the preaching of the Goſpel; yea the publicans and the Harlots

lots entred into the Kingdome of God before them; when the word took hold of the Publicans and Harlots they confeſt their ſins and were humbled, but the Scribes and Phariſees juſtified themſelves; Conſcience accuſed one, and excuſed the other; therefore one was convinced and converted, but the other was lifted up and hardned.

Conſid. 14. *He that is but almoſt a Chriſtian, is in a ſad condition, becauſe of the miſerable diſappointments of the laſt day,* doubtleſſe this is one of the woes pronounced againſt thoſe who are lifted up to Heaven, and from thence caſt down to Hell. To fall from ſuch hopes and confidence, and preſumptions, as many half-chriſtians have, to a ſtate of miſery (as much below other men, as their hopes were above theirs) muſt needs be an extremity of miſery, to fall down a precipice, from an expectation and aſſurance of happineſſe, to be plunged in endleſs and remedileſs griefe, & horror; this muſt needs be a double Hell. Theſe are the men and women that have puniſhment of loſſe as well as ſenſe. The puniſhment of loſſe is nothing ſo conſiderable to other men, as it is to them. For, for a man to loſe that which he neither had, nor hoped for, nor cared for, is but ſmall to what it is to him that hoped it, attempted it, and concluded

cluded himself in a manner possessed of it. A man that never meant to go to Sea, nor cared for merchandizing, laments not that he hath not the riches of the *Indies*, because he never studied for, nor indeavour'd it. But the Merchant that victuals & mans his ship, and goes a long voyage, and fails of his design in the very Continent, or that is taken coming back, or is forced to cast all overboard in a storm, when he is within sight of his own shoar, he is tormented with this losse, feels it, and smarts under it. The very loss of such a mans hopes, is as great an affliction as can befal him. Thus doubtlesse the bare losse of Heaven, will be a Hell to the half Christian, and will fill his soul with inconceiveable sorrow. Beside the punishment of his hypocrisie (which shall increase his pain) he shall be more exquitely tortured with the sense of his losse then other men, which will be like a gnawing Worm continually afflicting his soul, and, will be as bad, if not worse, then all the devils can inflict upon him. Was it not think you a sad aggravation of the misery of the foolish Virgins, (who kept company all their dayes with the wise) to be separated from them, and to be reckoned with the transgressors? Oh were they not in hell in their spirits, as soon as they saw

saw their Lamps gone out? what a darkness was then upon the face of their souls? utter darkness, and desparing thoughts, blacker then any that ever covered the face of *Egypt*. Was not (think you) their trouble greatly increased by the accession of this evil unto the rest, that this was an unlooked for grief? they rose to trim their lamps with confidence of being able to walk by the light of their Lamps, as well as the other. But when they came to the door, and found that shut against them, and cry'd, Lord, Lord, and had no other language, but I know you not; how do you think their hearts could hold any longer? Did they not now break, and did they not now begin to beat their wretched breasts faster then they had beaten at the door, and lament themselves, wishing that they could but find any place to hide themselves from his power, who could not get into his favour? And all this being carried back to their former condition, must needs afflict them; they a few hours since had their Lamps burning, and shops open, where they might have bought oyl for their vessels, but now their Lamps are gone out, and the shops are all shut, and no provision is laid up, nor none to be gotten for eternity.

Oh

Oh it was not many hours since, that they had strong hopes of being saved, but now they have none; *Oh now they wish they had that hope again, or wish they had never had any,* that the remembrance of it might not torment them; but this cannot be? *they can neither recover what they have lost, nor forget what they had.* What do you think is the condition of these poor souls? are not they in hell already? is it needfull to cast them into another hell? surely the punishment of losse doth deeply afflict them, and if they should be left under the bare sentence of an exclusion from the Kingdome of God, they would suffer in some proportion with the rest of the damned; what then will be their misery, when they shall be thrown amongst the damned and cast into utter darkness? Oh my friends think on these things, and take heed that this be not your case. I fear it will be thus with some of you that are here, *that some of you will be found dead like the Levites concubine, with your hands upon the threshold of the house and Kingdome of God,* some of you that have had great convictions, made great promises, made some attempts upon Reformation, taken up a profession, and gone so far as to give some hope to others, perhaps much more to your

selves

ſelves, take heed that you do not fall from this hope; if you do, it will be more tolerable for them of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* then for you. Thus I have given you a glance of the ſad and woful eſtate of ſuch as are almoſt Chriſtians, and though what I have ſaid may convince you, that ſuch as theſe are in a miſerable condition; yet words are too weak, and our conceptions are all tóo ſhallow to expreſſe, or take in the inexpreſſible and inconceivable wretchedneſſe of the men of this rank and order in the World: That which *Francis Spira* breathed out in agony of his ſoul, when he felt a Hell kindled in his conſcience, theſe men will breath out at laſt in Hell. Oh what a fearful thing is is (ſaid he) to be almoſt a Chriſtian.

CONCLUSION.

Some Directions how to avoid this evil temper.

BUt you will ſay, How ſhall I do to avoid this evil frame and temper which you have diſcovered? what ſhall we do that we may not be half Chriſtians? I ſhall ſhut up the application of this Doctrine with a few directions to you that deſire to bee Chriſtians indeed.

1. *Direct.*

1. *Direct.* If thou wouldest be altogether a Christian, then labour to be very exact in thy first works of Christianity; if thou would'st build high, be sure to lay the foundation well; make a good beginning, if ever thou wouldst see a good end. It was the Lords advice to the Church of *Ephesus*, *Rev.* 2. 5. and there can be no better given. Do thy first works, labour to revive the sense of sin which thou hadst at first, and call to minde how apprehensive thou wert of thy need of Christ; renew thy close with Christ, and choose him afresh as if thou hadst never chosen him. Be often in these first works; for though half-christians are defective in many things, yet the ground and reason of all their defects lies in this, that they were never right and sound in the beginning. Their first works of closing with Christ, and humbling their souls for sin, was never truly performed yet; and whatever is built where the foundation is weak will fall.

2. *Direct.* Study Gospel perfection, for know God requires a perfection now under the Gospel, as well as he did under the Law; though that perfection which the Law requires, cannot be attained now by any, yet there is another perfection suited to the Gospel, and to thy state and condition

tion required (viz.) First a perfection of Desire.

Secondly of design; it is not a bare desire, but of desires combined and strongly contriving to attain the end.

Thirdly, Of indeavours; these designs are not the bare secret workings of the thoughts, and the idle thoughts of the sluggard, who would have his work done, if it could be done with thinking while he lies and stretches himself upon his bed; but these designes must be brought forth into act, and back'd with all the use of the means, which may further and facilitate such a work.

Fourthly, There is a perfection of self resignation; though thou canst not serve the Lord perfectly with any member of the body, or any faculty of the soul, yet thou must resign all these to the Lord, to labour to serve the Lord, both actively and passively, by and with all these.

3. *Direct.* Keep a deep and tender sense of thy own failings to humble thee, and to quicken thee to look after this perfection; for nothing makes men sit down short of this, but pride of spirit, and want of a due search and inquiry into their own defections; it was this which made *Paul* presse forward, *Phil* 3. 12, 13, 14. I count not that

that I have yet apprehended, and surely thou wilt so account of thy self; if thou doest but take an account of thy daily failings; but pride of spirit and an oversight of our own spiritual wants and weaknesses, makes us sit down short of the mark, as high-conceited *Laodicea* did, *Rev.* 3. 17.

4. *Direct.* Be much in eying of Jesus Christ, who is thy true patern, by whom thou art to walk, and to whom thou oughtest to be conformed, 1. *Jo.* 2. 6. He that says that he abides in Christ, ought to walk even as Christ walked. Nothing doth so much stint and streighten the spirits of men, as the looking to low and mean examples of holiness; but surely if we did look to the Lord Jesus, whose life is layed before us so eminently in the word, we should see cause enough to be humbled when we are at highest, and not sit down under any attainments, seeing we fall short so far of him who is our pattern.

5. *Direct.* Be sure to make conscience of the inward and hidden part of duties, make Conscience of that which no eye sees but the Lords. Men may see the outward acts, and the external ornaments as flourishes of gifts and parts, but have thou a chief care to exercise grace in every thing; for this is that which makes thee pass for a Christi-

an

in before God, whatever makes thee ſeem ſuch before men. If thou doeſt thus, thy veſſel ſhall not be found empty at laſt, nor thou be condemned for an empty outſide profeſſor.

6. *Direct.* Never think thy ſelf enough a Chriſtian, ſo long as thou findeſt any ſo much a Chriſtian as thy ſelf. You know when men run in a race together, a man does not content himſelf to run as faſt as others, but if any comes up with him, or neer him, it makes him ſtrive, and put forth all his ſtrength in running, that he may keep ſtill in the head of the company, and lead the way to all. He fears if any one ſhould come up with him, that he would take the prize from him; thus it ſhould be with a Chriſtian, who ſhould thus run, if he would obtain, 1 *Cor.* 9 24. not as it were to get a prize with others, but a prize from all others.

Laſtly, Whatever thy condition be, or how great ſoever thy attainments are, yet labour to be much more a Chriſtian then thou art; if thou ſhouldeſt excel all others, yet then make it thy buſineſſe to excel thy ſelf; ſo ſhalt thou be ſure not to fall under the weight of this heavy word, which hath been ſpoken to thoſe who are but almoſt Chriſtians.

FINIS.